

COMMUNITY

British
Columbia**Project:*****Legal Education for Live-in Caregivers about Labour Exploitation and Human Trafficking*****West Coast Domestic Workers' Association**

West Coast Domestic Workers' Association (WCDWA), established in Vancouver in 1986, facilitates access to justice for current and former live-in caregivers through the provision of legal assistance, legal information, public legal education, and advocacy.

In 2013, WCDWA partnered with the BC Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Justice (OCTIP) to implement a project called *Preventing Labour Exploitation and Trafficking of Live-in Caregivers* in BC.

The project's objectives were to educate live-in caregivers, their service providers, and networks of social support about the crime of human trafficking in BC, and how to get help if needed. Legal education sessions were held in fourteen communities in British Columbia.

The sessions were conducted on weekends to ensure the participation of live-in caregivers. Each session began with a presentation and discussion of employment standards in British Columbia, followed by a presentation on human trafficking and labour exploitation. Participants learned the definition of human trafficking, indicators for labour exploitation, and how and where to seek assistance. At the end of the presentations, one-to-one legal consultation sessions were held between live-in caregivers and a representative of WCDWA to discuss specific issues related to their unique legal situation in Canada. Individuals were able to seek assistance regarding questions concerning their immigration status, and concerns related to labour exploitation, human trafficking, and abuse.

Legal education sessions were conducted in Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, Langley, North Vancouver, Squamish, Victoria, Nanaimo, Vernon, Kamloops, Prince George, Dawson Creek, Cranbrook, Williams Lake, and Fort Saint John in 2013 and early 2014.

As a result of the awareness created through the presentations, a number of individuals who experienced labour exploitation and human trafficking came forward to seek assistance. All those who came forward were assisted with the help of WCDWA BC's OCTIP and other local community partners.

“Awareness results in people seeking assistance,” stated WCDWA’s Legal Advocate Darla Tomeldan. “Most workers don’t even know that they are in a situation of labour trafficking until they understand the definition and the indicators of human trafficking, and that is why creating awareness and providing public legal education is so crucial to prevent and eliminate labour exploitation.”