

COMMUNITY

Prince
Rupert

Project:

“Protecting our Women”**Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert**

The Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert is an inclusive organization that provides programs and services to the entire community, with emphasis on the needs of the First Nations people in and around Prince Rupert.

Carol Azak is the Aama Goot Women’s Coordinator for the Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert. In 2014, Carol developed a unique project called *“Protecting our Women”* with funding from a Ministry of Justice Crime Prevention and Remediation grant. The project assists girls and women of all ages to understand the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Further, the project encourages each participant to develop a simple safety plan.



Step
#1

Project Steps:**1. Create an awareness raising pamphlet about sexual exploitation and human trafficking**

Carol created a very simple two-sided pamphlet for girls and women in her community that provides information about the crime of human trafficking. The pamphlet asks:

*“Do you know what sexual exploitation and human trafficking is?
Please read and help to create awareness for yourself and others.”*

The pamphlet’s simple information and definitions of sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced labour are adapted from BC’s Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP), Ministry of Justice, Pocket Cards on human trafficking.

Carol designed a beautiful symbol for the project of a woman’s face inside a green heart, with the words *“Protecting Our Women”*. This image is included on all project materials including pens, notebooks, backpacks and other materials.

The pamphlet was discussed with four groups of girls and women who attended meetings at the Friendship House in Prince Rupert. Age appropriate approaches were used to encourage participation. Each group chose a name for their group which held special meaning for them. For example,

1. **Power Puff Girls** – children and youth from 7 to 12 years old
2. **Youth Empower** – youth and young adults from 13 to 19 years old
3. **Ladyz Club** – adult women
4. **Kaien Island Elders Group** – Elders of the Tsimshian First Nation

Participants from each group were encouraged to read a short section of the pamphlet to other group members at a meeting. If they did so, they would receive a small gift or door prize (e.g. a gift card, a movie card, hygiene gift, Good Food box, key chain with a whistle and light etc.) For example, the younger age group read only small parts of the pamphlet at each meeting. Carol held a shorter and simpler discussion about the concepts of sexual exploitation and human trafficking for the younger age group.

Snacks and food were provided for participants, an important incentive to encourage attendance. A discussion followed about what participants thought human trafficking might look like in their community. Posters and DVDs about human trafficking and sexual exploitation were also used to encourage age-appropriate discussions of these topics. (For example, posters from B.C.'s Children of the Street Society were ordered for this project). A quiet, safe environment was created at the Friendship House that allowed for these topics to be discussed in an open manner. Carol made sure that safe rides for the participants to the Friendship Centre were provided by offering city transit bus tickets, taxis, and the organizations' van.

Step #2

2. Invite community members and youth to complete a survey about sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

Carol created a simple survey for girls, youth, women and Elders to complete for a prize of a backpack, which contained a notebook and pen with the "Protecting Our Women" image.

Participants were asked to answer three simple questions and return the survey to Carol to receive the backpack. The questions included:

1. Please share with us what you know about sexual exploitation and human trafficking.
2. Do you know who you can go to, or where you can find help if you—or someone you know—becomes a victim?
3. Do you know what a safety list is? If so, please share.

Please print:

Name:

Phone/or email:

Date:



The survey was distributed at information tables, and to each of the groups listed in Step 1. Once a participant completed the survey and returned it to Carol, they would receive the gift of a backpack. To date, over 400 surveys have been completed and returned. Participants are encouraged to use the notebook inside the backpack to write a safety list of phone numbers of police and service providers who could be called if they, or someone they know, was concerned about a situation of sexual exploitation or human trafficking. (e.g. hotel, hospital, victim services worker, police etc.) The participants were encouraged to add to this list as needed, and to carry the notebook with them at all times to refer to these important phone numbers when needed.

**Step
#3**

3. Follow up by Project Coordinator

Carol reviewed all the surveys and contacted the participant if they indicated that they did not know where to find help, or how to create a safety list. Carol provided important phone numbers to community members in her follow up phone call or email, and also addressed any other safety concerns on an individual basis.

**Step
#4**

4. Partner with community members and service providers to make referrals

Carol partnered with staff at the Friendship Centre including the mental health worker, community worker and drug and alcohol counsellor to receive referrals to her program. All staff at the Friendship Centre were made aware of this project, and information about the definitions of sexual exploitation and human trafficking were reviewed.

Carol also partnered with the Friendship House to provide information about this project at community driven events. For example Carol participated in events held on June 21st for the Aboriginal Day Celebrations, in August for the Summer Block Party, in October for the Thanksgiving Dinner event, and at the Community Christmas Dinner event. Each event reached over 200 people.

Carol's main message to all those who participated in the "Protecting Our Women" Project was, "can you share this important information with others?"



“If people become aware of what sexual exploitation and human trafficking is and are comfortable enough to share it with others, it makes it a stronger message that can be shared with the whole community.”

**- Carol Azak, Women's Coordinator
Friendship House Association of Prince Rupert**