

Immigrants targeted by abuse program

Domestic abuse in this area is a significant problem, but one that is not reported enough.

BY JENNIFER O'BRIEN
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Immigrant women are more likely to be victims of abuse than their Canadian counterparts, one domestic violence researcher said yesterday.

That's why organizers of a program to raise awareness about domestic abuse plan to take their campaign into immigrant communities.

"I see it as a significant problem in some of our diverse communities and one

that is not reported enough," said Alfredo Marroquin, who works with Changing Ways and the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children.

"The immigrant population is a very important component in Canadian society and we need to provide (newcomers) with the tools to end violence against women.

"Immigrant families have many additional stresses such as the pressures of adapting to a new country, and men not

being able to get a job."

He noted women are often isolated in Canada, marginalized by language and cultural barriers and separated from family from back home.

Men sometimes suffer from pressures of being unable to find work when cultural belief systems cast them as providers.

Marroquin was one of several speakers at yesterday's conference on domestic violence, put on by the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, the Children's Aid Society and George Brown College.

The conference addressed



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findings of the domestic violence death review committee in its annual report to the Ontario coroner's office.

Several anti-violence experts spoke of the important role friends and family play in preventing domestic violence and killings.

Tim Kelly, of the Changing Ways program for men who abuse women, spoke of successes of the provincial campaign called Neighbours, Friends and Families. That campaign aims to educate the public on how to recognize signs of domestic abuse and what to do.

Marroquin said he has been working with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants in an effort to gear Neighbours, Friends and Families toward diverse communities.

About 250 people — including police officers, children's aid workers, probation and

parole officers and staff from local Crown Attorney's offices — turned out yesterday.

"It is good to see that this has gotten beyond the issue of awareness," said Peter Jaffe, director of the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children.

"For 25 years we've been talking about it as a serious issue, but now we are talking about action.

"The most important theme of the day is the collaboration," Jaffe said.

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