

Women can be abusive too
by Lloyd Robertson

When drinking she became violent. He was often bruised. Once he was stabbed with a knife. They went to marital counselling. Secretly, he kept part of his pay cheque from her. Finally he had enough money to leave this northern Saskatchewan fly-in community. She caught up with him as he walked toward the landing strip. She left him bleeding in the snow as she drove off in their truck. Police came by and laughed at him. He laughed at himself. The crime was not reported.

Both feminists and Christians agree that women are the gentler, more nurturing sex. So, when a man and a woman have accused each other of violence I have generally been more inclined to accept the woman's version. Even so, I have been surprised at how many times the woman has admitted that she is the violent one in the relationship. Are northern Saskatchewan women different from women elsewhere?

Recent reports suggest otherwise. The image of women as the non-violent victim of men is a myth. Even more unsettling, we have been consistently lied to about gender violence for decades.

In 1989 feminist researchers Leslie Kennedy and Donald Dutton reported that 13.3% of Alberta men had committed acts of violence against their spouses in one year alone. The study was extensively cited in the 1990 federal government report *The War Against Women* which, in turn, led to a federally funded campaign to change attitudes of governments, police departments, courts and hospitals to a more "pro-woman" stance.

It was not until 1999 that Simon Fraser University researcher Marilyn Kwong reviewed the data and found that much of it had not been reported. For example, 17.1% of Alberta women admitted to acts of violence against their spouses during the same time period that 13.3% of men had acted violently towards them. Further, women were almost twice as likely as men to commit more extreme acts of violence such as choking, kicking or using a weapon. Even more revealing, 67% of the women said they had initiated the violence while only 26% said the violence was male initiated. When contacted by the *National Post* Kennedy and Dutton explained their "lies of omission" by saying that they had only been interested in male-to-female violence at the time.

University of Calgary sociologist, Dr. Eugen Lupri, whose research was used to justify another million dollar campaign against wife abuse, complained that the part of his findings that showed that wives were twice as likely as husbands to attempt to hit their spouse was ignored. Dr. Lupri told the *National Post*:

"Feminists, themselves, use our studies but they only
publish what they like."

Altho Statistics Canada records how many women are assaulted by men, it does not bother to record how many men are assaulted by women. Armed with this one-sided "knowledge" federal agencies, such as the National Clearing House Against Family Violence confidently report that men are the violent gender.

This one-sided reporting creates a misandrist or "anti-male" bias in agencies that are mandated to deal with family violence. For example, more children are physically abused by their mothers than by their fathers. Yet six times as many men as women are charged by our justice system. Apparently child beating is more of a criminal act if the perpetrator is a man.

Women are allowed additional defenses in court on the basis of feminist ideology. Most readers will remember the wife of the Calgary oil executive who went to the United States and bought a gun with which she shot her husband. She was found not guilty because he had abused her. To understand the sexism in this decision one need only reverse the roles. Had some man travelled to the United States, bought a gun and shot his wife would he have been allowed the defense that she had abused him?

The "abuse card" has become almost a standard ploy in child custody cases. The unproved possibility that a man may be violent can be a factor in granting an interim order. Once the child is resident with the mother she can then argue that it would be emotionally unsettling to "uproot" the child.

Feminism is wrong. Violence is not a gender issue. It is a human issue. Until we tackle violence in both genders then the cycle of violence will continue.

In the mean time, there are now more that 400 shelters for women who are victims of domestic violence in this country. There is not one publicly funded program for abused men.