



# ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

## PROGRAM EVALUATION 2006

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## INTRODUCTION

FaithLink recognizes program evaluation as a foundation of good practice. By critically examining activities and achievements program evaluation seeks to accomplish several important goals:

- to inform decision-making;
- to examine effectiveness of services and the efficiency with which these are provided;
- to identify areas of strength and weaknesses needing correction;
- to provide accountability to funding bodies, constituents and the general public,
- and to add to the knowledge base, increasing the extent to which such work can be evidence based.<sup>1</sup>

This report summarizes FaithLink's activities and achievement of 2006 and draws recommendations intended to inform the continuing development of the program. First, however, it is useful to provide a brief context of our mission and work.<sup>2</sup>

## PROGRAM SYNOPSIS

The program is grounded in the belief that, for a community like Calgary to have a broadly based and coordinated response to domestic and sexual violence, religious/spiritual communities (including ethno-cultural communities) must be included.

Our mission statement encapsulates this vision: *Spiritual/religious communities and service providers working together to prevent domestic violence and to provide healing and hope to all those affected by it.*

With leadership from both spiritual and secularly-based community leaders, FaithLink's focus has developed from exploring the 'how' of engaging religious/spiritual communities to defining five interlocking priorities, each grounded in best practices. These priorities are:

- raising awareness of family violence and increasing the capacity of spiritual/religious/cultural communities to respond to disclosures of abuse;

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<sup>1</sup> Pietrzak, Jeanne, Malia Ramler, Tanya Renner, Lucy Ford & Neil Gilbert. *Practical Program Evaluation: Examples from Child Abuse Prevention*. Sage Publications. Newbury Park, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> The booklet *Building Bridges of Collaboration: How religious/spiritual communities and service providers came together to address issues of family and sexual abuse*. March, 2006 provides a more detailed accounting of FaithLink's history and development.

- raising awareness and building capacity with service providers and spiritual leaders in responding to the impact of abuse on the spirit;
- building understanding and collaborative working relationships between spiritual/religious/cultural communities and secularly-based service providers;
- conducting relevant research that explores the interface between the spiritual and the secular regarding issues of family violence; and
- providing self-care opportunities for service providers who work with those affected by domestic abuse.

Currently involved constituents include:

- spiritual and community leaders from Christian, Jewish, Khmer Buddhist (Cambodian) and Laotian congregations/communities
- family and sexual violence services providers, including:
  - Emergency and second-stage shelters
  - Counseling and domestic and sexual abuse intervention services
  - General counseling and immigrant serving agencies
- the Faculty of Social Work, University of Calgary
- Interested individuals

## THE 2006 INDEPENDENT EVALUATION

In the spring of 2006, FaithLink contracted with RESOLVE Alberta to do an independent evaluation of the program's goals and methods. Based on a qualitative analysis of interviews and supplementary resource material the resulting report<sup>3</sup> speaks to the program's acceptance within the broader community, and the need for it to continue and to expand its work. This evaluation documents that FaithLink has become a credible, integral part of the family and sexual violence services sector, and is seen as a significant resource by religious/spiritual and cultural leaders.

The evaluation report notes the strength that is inherent in taking a flexible but measured approach to needs as they arise and responding to opportunities as they are presented. Individuals interviewed by the evaluators recognized that the task FaithLink has set for itself is daunting and complex. They offered their encouragement to 'carry on and extend' the work, building on the success already achieved and lessons learned in the process.

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<sup>3</sup> Rothery, Michael. *FaithLink Project Evaluation*, RESOLVE, Alberta, June, 2006.

## GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

During 2006, FaithLink has been fortunate in having the support of a number of supporters. These have included: Alberta Children's Services; the National Crime Prevention Strategy, Community Mobilization Program; the Ecumenical Task Force for the Prevention of Family Violence; Status of Women Canada; and private donors.

### **BUILDING A STRATEGIC ALLIANCE**

In the fall of 2005 FaithLink joined discussions with the Action Committee Against Violence (ACAV), the Calgary Coalition on Family Violence (CCFV), and the Violence Information and Education Centre (VIEC) with the intent of forming a 'strategic alliance.' Although we were not sure at the time what form the alliance would take, we were confident that our coming together would strengthen the work of each of the organizations/programs and, as a united group, strengthen our support of the broad Calgary community in its collective response to domestic and sexual violence. We were supported in our deliberations by: the United Way of Calgary and Area; the City of Calgary Family and Community Support Services; Calgary and Area Child and Family Services; and Alberta Children's Services.

### **CRITICAL DECISIONS TAKEN**

In January, 2006, Framework Partners Inc. was contracted to assist us in our deliberations. Two critical decisions emerged: to co-locate our organizations/programs; and to form a common legal entity. Working from a common site would facilitate closer working relationships between our respective staff members, facilitating collaboration and, where applicable, the integration of services. Coming under the auspice of a common legal entity would offer the strength of sharing three organizational functions: shared governance (i.e., Board of Directors and executive leadership); shared administrative supports and financial management; and shared fund raising endeavours.

### **MOVING**

On October 1st we took possession of a suite of offices, located in the Hillhurst area, which provides for our collective needs and offers opportunities to become a meeting place and resource center for those working within the domestic and sexual violence services sector. Our space includes a bright and quiet area for the resource library and a large board room suitable for both business meetings and training seminars. Our individual work spaces all have natural light and accommodate our needs. We are comfortable in our new home and look forward to developing its potential.

Also during the fall, the VIEC Society negotiated a transfer of its assets to the ACAV Society and dissolved as an organization.

### **DEVELOPING A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

While the programs were moving into and adjusting to their new surroundings, others were hard at work doing the groundwork for creating a common legal entity and developing a governance structure. To facilitate the creation of a common legal entity it was decided to change the name of the ACAV Society to The Alliance to End Violence Society (AEV), and thereby allowing its structure to be used as 'the shell' for the new organization. There were a number of advantages in this course of action:

- An already established set of by-laws could be easily adapted to reflect the new entity;
- The application for charitable status, already begun by the ACAV Society, could be transferred to the new entity, allowing increased flexibility in obtaining funding;
- As a registered society, the new entity could enter into contracts, e.g., rental agreements and leases for equipment.

Along with the legal work which was required, actions were being taken to create a Board of Directors for the new organization. The ACAV Society Board of Directors was formally dissolved. A Board of Directors for the AEV was formally established. Its membership includes two representatives from each of the three remaining strategic alliance organizations. FaithLink’s representatives are Rabbi Howard Voss-Altman and Wayne Stewart.

It was considered important to create a clear division between the oversight of the business and the service function of the new organization. To this end, the Board of Directors, whose members are drawn from the community at large, will hold responsibility for the business affairs of the AEV. The professional trust of the work will be vested in a Co-ordinating Council, comprising representatives and individuals engaged in activities and services to reduce violence in Calgary. In addition, each of the organizations which make up the AEV will retain its advisory committee. In the case of FaithLink, its Steering Committee serves this role.

#### **DEVELOPING AN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

- Although significant work on the governance of the AEV has been completed, discussions continue as to its organizational structure and the formal Letters of Agreement which will articulate the working relationships between the alliance members. Whatever design is eventually decided upon, there is commitment to supporting the continuation of each program.

## **FAITHLINK STRUCTURE AND STAFFING**

### **STEERING AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES**

FaithLink emerged from the coming together of secularly-based service providers and spiritually-based leaders with a common desire to enhance the collaborative response to domestic and sexual violence. Building on its original small committee, the Steering Committee now comprises some 33 members, representing:

- Immigrant serving agencies
- Domestic and sexual violence service providing agencies
- General counseling agencies
- The University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work

- Representatives from Christian, Jewish and Khmer Buddhist spiritual communities. (In addition, individual members enrich the committee by bringing their own religious/spiritual perspectives – Muslim, Hindu, Ismaili, Mormon.)
- Interested individuals

The importance of the Committee including individuals who are actively involved in their respective religious/spiritual/ethno-cultural communities is recognized. As the work expands new members will be recruited who can inform the work in any given community.

An Executive Committee, elected by and from the Steering Committee, assumes responsibility for policy and program development, financial oversight and personnel.

### **STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Vesting the work with individuals who both understand the issue of family violence and are members of specific religious/spiritual communities/ethno-cultural communities is a best practice principle which guides our work. To this end, we have employed or have contracted with individuals who work directly with Christian congregations and institutions, and within the Jewish, Khmer Buddhist (Cambodian) and Laotian communities. This small, but capable, group utilizes their understanding of culture, beliefs and language in translating the mission of FaithLink within their respective communities.

The work is also facilitated by a host of volunteers who offer their unique skills and support. Their contributions allow the work to deepen, expand and operate efficiently.

## **ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **BEST PRACTICES**

Each of FaithLink’s priority focuses is grounded in best practice principles.

- As awareness of domestic violence increases within a given population or community, disclosures will result. Therefore the work of raising awareness within religious/spiritual/ethno-cultural communities must be done in concert with enhancing the capacity to respond effectively to it.
- Experiencing abuse affects the whole person, including the spiritual, necessitating a multi-faceted response. Given that most service providers are limited in the range of services they can provide, taking a holistic perspective requires coordinating across professional disciplines and across secularly and spiritually-based domains. Clients who desire spiritual support and counsel should have access to spiritual leaders of their own choosing who understand the dynamics of domestic abuse.

- Collaborative working relationships are built on trust and mutual respect. Secularly-based professionals and spiritual leaders can work effectively together when there is mutual understanding and recognition of the unique contribution made by each.
- First responders to traumatized individuals are at risk of experiencing vicarious trauma. This includes those who respond and give support to individuals impacted by domestic and sexual violence. Maintaining personal wellness is therefore of importance to service providers working within this sector.
- When program development and practice are grounded in empirical evidence and a broad knowledge base they are stronger and more effective. When research is grounded within the rich soil of practice the knowledge base is enhanced and deepened.

### **WITH RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL/ETHNO-CULTURAL COMMUNITIES**

As our work develops we are increasingly aware of the interconnectedness between religion belief, spiritual practice and culture mores. Although this integration is most evident within identified ethno-cultural communities or groups whose identity has been forged through long-standing minority status, it is also a factor in many groups who are within the mainstream of Canadian society. Thus, we are increasingly aware of the need to broaden our perspective to take this interlocking of belief, practice and identity into account in our work.

Our work with any religious/spiritual/cultural group is two fold: to raise awareness of the issues of domestic and sexual violence; and to build capacity among community leaders to respond appropriately and effectively when abuse occurs among community members.

During 2006, we have pursued these goals through our continued work within the Christian, Jewish and Khmer-Canadian Cambodian communities and our beginning work with the Laotian community.

#### *Raising Awareness and Building Capacity within the Christian Community*

Our work within various Christian congregations and denominations continues to develop and grow. Our work has included the following activities.

- Presentations about intimate violence to some congregational groups and ministerial classes. Approximates 360 individuals were reached.
- Raising Safe Kids/Teens - a workshop designed to help parents raise children and adolescents who are safe from bullying and dating violence and safe for others – has been developed and is proving popular.
- Articles have been contributed to Roman Catholic Carillon, the Calgary Diocese magazine, which is published nine times per year and has a circulation of 19,000 throughout Southern Alberta. This distribution includes 70 parishes and all Roman Catholic schools within the diocese. Each edition is posted on the diocese website.



- Informational, educational and resource materials were developed and distributed:
  - 1500 brochures about domestic abuse specifically for use in Christian congregations were distributed to congregations in Calgary, Lethbridge and Red Deer.
  - The Turn Off The Violence Resource Manual continues to have wide distribution.
    - The 2006 edition was developed and distributed to over 490 congregations in Calgary and surrounding area. In addition, copies were requested and provided to: groups in two communities in British Columbia; the Southwest Alberta Child and Family Services (Lethbridge); and the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.
    - The 2004 edition was provided to 50 congregations. (Each year a new addition of the Turn Off The Violence Resources Manual is developed and addresses different aspects of domestic and sexual violence. They are designed to build upon each other.)
    - 15 copies of the 2004, 2005 and 2006 editions of the Turn Off The Violence Resources Manual were provided to the Brooks Women's Shelter.
  - The Domestic Violence Response Protocol For Faith Communities was up-dated. Training in its use was provided to nine spiritual leaders. Copies were made available to two Calgary congregations.
  - Materials, specific to the setting and situation, were provided to:
    - Six religious and secular educational institutions;
    - Outreach Canada (a Corporate Chaplaincy Agency);
    - Congregations, agencies and groups in: Red Deer, Lethbridge, Abbotsford, BC, and St. Catherines, Ont.
- Some forty Christian women participated in four focus groups which were held to gain an understanding of their experiences with how their faith communities respond to situations of domestic abuse.
- FaithLink staff members are increasingly being asked for their advice in handling specific abuse related situations. This past year we were called upon to offer information and counsel in ten specific situations. Requests were received from: spiritual leaders, Christian school and college-based staff, individuals, and a health care institution.

#### *Raising Awareness and Building Capacity within the Jewish Community*

One of the goals FaithLink strives to achieve in its work with any given religious/spiritual/cultural community is for the community to assume increasing responsibility for carrying on the work. This goal is being met within the Jewish community. Over the past three years, awareness of the issue of domestic violence has been raised and the capacity of key leaders to respond to disclosures enhanced. As a result community groups, agencies and organizations are taking the initiative in organizing events and supporting activities which continue to address the issues of intimate violence and the barriers faced by

Jewish women who experience abuse. Plans are being made for the community, through the avenue of Jewish Family Services, to assume full responsibility for this work in 2008.

The following is a listing of the significant activities and events which occurred during the year.

- Presentations on the issue of domestic and sexual abuse within the Jewish community were made to women's groups and the video *When Push Comes to Shove Its No Longer Love* was shown to youth and parenting groups. A presentation was made to one congregation.
- Articles have been provided to the Hadassah newsletter.
- A Hadassah chapter continues to maintain an apartment at a local women's shelter for use by Jewish families.
- For the first time the topic of domestic abuse was included in this year's Jewish Film Festival. The *When Push Comes to Shove Its No Longer Love* video and a movie portraying the difficulty faced by some Jewish women in obtaining a divorce were shown. Penny Krowitz, Executive Director of Jewish Women International Canada, was present to engage the audience in discussion.
- Following the success of the film festival event, a group of women began plans to again address the issue of divorce in recognition of International Women's Day March, 2007. The barriers some Jewish women face in obtaining a religiously sanctioned divorce binds them in abusive relationships.
- A Response Protocol was developed and distributed to synagogue leaders, with accompanying training for Rabbis and synagogue leaders.
- Approximately 20 women participated in two focus groups and individual interviews to discuss the barriers they, as Jewish women, face when experiencing intimate violence.
- As awareness is raised there is an increasing openness by community members to acknowledge that domestic violence affects their community. As a result, Rabbis are receiving disclosures of abuse from congregant and community members and FaithLink staff members are increasingly being asked for information and to facilitate access to appropriate resources. The comment of one Rabbi summarizes the change that is occurring within the community: In his previous eight years of his rabbinate he did not receive one disclosure of abuse: in the past year he has received four disclosures.

#### *Raising Awareness and Building Capacity within the Khmer Canadian (Cambodian) Community*

Our work within this religious/ethno-cultural community has been focused on raising awareness of domestic abuse and developing resource materials for leaders. These endeavours have included the following.

- An informational brochure utilizing both the English and the Khmer languages, was developed and 1000 printed, incorporating the Cultural Center's Logo and the community's traditional colour.

- A community meeting was held to present the brochure. In addition to its utilization by the Calgary community, it has also been made available to the Cambodian communities in Red Deer and Brooks.
- The community meeting which presented the brochure was also utilized to speak about family violence. Twenty five community members, representing youth, families and elders, attended. In addition, the local MLA and the Calgary Police Service liaison officer were in attendance and spoke.
- To develop a more in-depth educational resource for spiritual and community members, significant parts of the Turn Off The Violence Resource Manual was translated from English into Khmer. The translation work was completed in December. With a final review for accuracy and syntax the Manual will be printed and made available to spiritual and community leaders.
- Individual interviews were conducted with six community women to gain understanding of their experiences with domestic abuse and the barriers they face in accessing services.
- On-going support, through monthly meetings, was provided to the Temple Monk and a community resource person in their work with families from their community who were experiencing abuse. These discussions not only enhanced their capacity to respond, but provided an avenue for them to 'debrief' some of the very difficult situations with which they were involved.

#### *Raising Awareness and Building Capacity within the Laotian Community*

FaithLink received an invitation from members of a congregation within the Laotian community to discuss ways in which FaithLink could assist this community address the issue of family violence. Through a series of meetings with interested individuals we have outlined a number of activities, including:

- Providing basic training to at least one leader about the dynamics of domestic abuse and the resources that are available within the broader community;
- Developing an information brochure that will raise awareness of domestic abuse within the community and identify resources available to those experiencing abuse;
- Offering support to those individuals who respond to community members experiencing abuse and/or other crises.

Members of this immigrant and relatively small community, face many barriers to fully accessing resources. Utilizing the model developed with both the Jewish and the Cambodian communities, FaithLink will continue to assist this community gain understanding and build response capacity.

#### *Other religious/spiritual/ethno-cultural communities*

Through FaithLink's connections with individuals within the Hindu community one event was organized and held at the community's cultural center. A presentation was arranged and offered as one part of a larger day of activities. The presenter was a professional counselor who is also a member of the community. The presentation was well received by the approximately 100 people who attended.

Domestic abuse related printed materials, including a brochure and poster, were made available during the day.

### **RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO THE IMPACT OF ABUSE ON THE SPIRIT**

This focus area is in recognition of the importance of spirituality to those clients who have experienced family violence and who identify a spiritual quality to their lives; and for them to have their spirituality recognized and validated when they access secularly-based services. These two primary objectives are addressed through four interlocking components:

- A workshop for secularly-based service providers which aims to raise awareness of our own quests for meaning;
- The development of a list of screened spiritual leaders who have agreed to accept referrals from family violence related services for clients who wish to address the spiritual as part of their healing process;
- A brochure, designed for clients and distributed to secularly-based resources, alerting clients that spiritual support and counsel is available to them; and
- Opportunities for service providers and referral accepting spiritual leaders to periodically meet to discuss how they can better work together in providing a holistic approach to mutual clients.

Activities during 2006 within this area of focus included the following.

- Workshops regarding the importance of the spiritual were presented to the staff members of two agencies. Participants of these, and previous, workshops, requested additional information. Although they found the workshop helpful in raising their consciousness of their own spiritual journey – and thereby being more comfortable with that of their clients – they expressed a need to develop more understanding of, and skill in addressing, the impact an abusive experience can have on one's life paradigm. In response, FaithLink has begun the task of developing a 'second level' curriculum that would build on the current workshop base.
- Additional names have been added to the list of screened spiritual leaders who will accept referrals from family violence related services for clients who wish to address the spiritual as part of their healing process. The list currently includes spiritual leaders from: Buddhist, Christian, Ismaili and Jewish faith traditions.
- Brochures were made available to family and sexual violence service providers to make available to clients.
- Two luncheons were sponsored for spiritual leaders and service providers to discuss the practicalities of providing collaborative services to mutual clients. Each event was attended by 20-25 individuals. At each, the discussion was lively and interactive. There was an obvious recognition of the need for service providers and spiritual leaders to work together. They discussed guidelines for enhancing trust and co-operation. The group size at each event allowed for ease of networking and relationship building. One unexpected outcome was the sharing of the referral list among the spiritual leaders present. They commented on the importance to them

of knowing there are colleagues they can turn to for help and support when responding to congregants experiencing family violence.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES**

Although it has been the practice of FaithLink to sponsor at least one conference per year for service providers and spiritual leaders to come together to learn from each other and to discuss issues of mutual concern, we did not have a 2006 event. Not having a conference within the calendar year did not, however, mean that we were not addressing this focus area. Early in the year we began to plan for two events, both requiring significant planning and preparation. Both were scheduled for the spring of 2007.

Planning for *Breaking Sacred Bonds: A Collaborative Response to One Family's Experience of Domestic and Sexual Abuse* began in February, 2006. The format included a series of scripted scenes that would follow family members as they interacted with the various services and systems involved in a collaborative response to domestic and sexual violence combined with a panel of representatives from each service and system. The event was scheduled for March, 2007.

Planning also began on realizing the goal of sponsoring a conference that would focus on domestic violence within a Jewish context. To be successful it was deemed important to have internationally recognized Jewish presenters. Rabbi Mark Dratch, a respected leader in the Jewish domestic violence sector, agreed to be the keynote speaker. The Executive Director of Jewish Women International Canada agreed to participate as did a victim of abuse. *The Heart of the Matter: Domestic Violence in the Jewish Community* began to take shape. It is planned for May, 2007. The Jewish community has taken primary responsibility for planning this event, including underwriting some of the inherent costs.

## **CONDUCTING RELEVANT RESEARCH**

FaithLink is unusual compared to many similar initiatives for its level of commitment to evaluating its practices and outcomes and in conducting research. Findings from these ongoing activities have been used to inform program development, have been presented to the professional and academic communities and prepared for publication in professional journals.

### *Through Surveys, Focus Groups and Interviews*

An initial survey of spiritual leaders involved development of a detailed questionnaire which proved useful for measuring beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding domestic violence by these leaders in confronting the issue in their communities.

A series of interviews with key informants was conducted in 2006, with respondents selected because they are active in the community and in a position to assess FaithLink's impact. The analysis of these interviews provided excellent insights into the complexity of the program's work, and strong support for much of what had been done along with suggestions regarding future initiatives.

Also in 2006, a series of focus groups were conducted with women who are members of various Christian and Jewish communities, supplemented with individual interviews with several women from the Cambodian Buddhist community. One initial report of this research has been submitted to the funder, and a further, more in-depth analysis of this very rich data set is currently under way. The findings from this study are very important, since women in spiritual communities understand the life and needs of those communities from a special perspective, and are often very influential even if they do not occupy

positions of formal authority. Especially notable is the extent to which this research highlights the differences between the various communities, and the need for a differential response from programs such as FaithLink – what is highly useful with one community could be entirely inappropriate with another.

A study of beliefs, attitudes and practices of service providers in community agencies was also begun in 2006: data collection will continue into 2007. These are agencies that provide service to families where violence is an issue and our goal is to understand better how workers in such secular settings respond when they deal with clients for whom spiritual commitments are a critical part of their lives.

Subsequent to completion of the studies that are underway, FaithLink plans to conduct follow-up interviews with a sub-sample of spiritual leaders (drawn from the larger group that completed our initial survey) and with service providers. Interview schedules for these studies are under development and are being designed to enable us to detect changes occurring over time and attributable to FaithLink's interventions.

As the "FaithLink model" is implemented in other urban and rural communities, the knowledge we have accumulated from our own evaluations are proving useful; ideally we can replicate some of the research we have conducted to date with other sites as well, so that comparisons can be drawn and the generalizability of our conclusions assessed.

#### *Through A Qualitative Study of Meditation for Service Providers*

This research initiative emerged from FaithLink's 'Caring for the Caregiver' focus area. In spring, 2004, FaithLink sponsored a series of workshops, led by Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault, for individuals providing services to those affected by domestic and sexual violence. The focus of the workshops was participant self-care, in recognition of the risk for vicarious trauma for first responders to traumatized individuals. Dr. Bourgeault is a noted contemplative and Wisdom teacher. She met, over the space of a week, with small and large groups in sessions that ranged from an hour over lunch to a full day. Her focus was to introduce participants to a centered meditation practice.

Given the very positive response by participants to this meditation practice, a group of agency directors began to discuss how they could utilize the practice within the contexts of their agencies. The concept of conducting a piece of research was born and FaithLink was asked to provide leadership to the project. The research examined the efficacy of a centered meditation practice on: how front line counselors managed the stress experienced within the work place; the counselor-client relationship, specifically whether it increased the capacity of counselors to 'be present' with clients; and the capacity to work collaboratively with colleagues within one's own agency and/or within the larger family and sexual violence sector. Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark was a co-investigator.

The project first provided, over a six week period, training in, and support for, the centered meditative practice. A qualitative methodology was then utilized to gather data from those who participated in the training/support phase. Data were collected and analyzed during summer and fall, 2005. During 2006 the findings were presented in a variety of forums:

- The full report, *The Efficacy of Centering Meditation on Self-Care and Collaboration* was released to leaders within the domestic and sexual violence sector, research participants, funders and interested individuals June, 2006.

- The findings were presented at the RESOLVE Saskatchewan Research Conference, fall 2006.
- Two articles, based on the findings, are presently being prepared for publication in professional journals.

### **A BROADENING INTEREST**

As the work of FaithLink has gained credibility within the Calgary community it has attracted the attention of other communities. This interest resulted in requests for materials produced by FaithLink and for presentations. Invitations were received for presentations to groups, comprising spiritual leaders and service providers, from both Edmonton and Drumheller. Materials have been sent to interested individuals and group in Ontario and British Columbia.

One of the questions that is asked by other communities is whether they could replicate the FaithLink model within their local settings. In considering this question it has become clear to us that, one of the reasons for the program's success within the Calgary context is that it emerged from within the community. Although we are quite prepared to assist other communities, we do believe that the development of a specific model needs to be grounded within the leadership, ethos and resources of a given community. We therefore have decided not to 'franchise.'

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Clearly, the FaithLink project has been extremely active in the past year and can claim an impressive set of accomplishments as a consequence. This is evident whenever reports such as this are prepared, and was also a strong finding of the 2006 independent evaluation.

The work described above is ongoing, and the need for each of the services (and more) will continue to occupy the project in the future. The advice offered by informants interviewed for the independent evaluation emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum respecting the priorities that have evolved. There is no shortage of ideas for new initiatives but it is also recognized that it would be a serious error to overextend our resources by adding to our current workload if that means the services offered will suffer from being stretched too thin.

The recent changes in our organizational arrangements and facilities have been substantial, and the coming year will be a time for consolidating and fine tuning. Working agreements and understandings need to be entrenched which recognize the distinct identities of our major partners at the same time as collaboration is facilitated regarding governance, administration and fund raising.

As we continue pursuing our priority focuses, the principle of grounding our work in best practices will remain critical. An ongoing (and quite extensive) program of research will, it is hoped, assure that the program continues to develop in response to reliable information about what needs are paramount and what interventions are effective.

We have been active in disseminating what we have learned to other interested communities, and this will continue – the level of interest with which presentations of our work and research are greeted is consistently encouraging. Increasingly, we have well researched and documented information about how our work has impacted our community, and that is something we can increasingly share with other jurisdictions.

One of the clear lessons learned is that the project cannot attempt to fill the entire need for its services, but can only responsibly expand as resources and opportunities allow. We have been careful in this respect, only cultivating relationships with new spiritual/religious communities when it is clear that the interest is strong and also that we have access to appropriate staff and volunteer resources. Informants interviewed for our recent evaluation recognize the pressures to do more are strong but also urge continued care in responding to those pressures.

Resources permitting, the likely next priority will be to expand FaithLink's work among Calgary's growing Buddhist communities. Because of our work with the Cambodian community our network with other Buddhist groups and opportunities to extend services in their direction are steadily developing.

As with any project of its type, FaithLink is constantly engaged in fund-raising so that its contribution continues and the quality of its work is maintained. It goes without saying that this task will be a continuing preoccupation in the coming year.