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the pivot post

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News from Pivot Legal Society

Issue 1, April 2005

UN to visit Pivot

An arbitrary detention working group from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) has requested a meeting with Pivot Legal Society in Vancouver in early June.

The group, based in Geneva, Switzerland, will be made up of five independent experts and has been sent to investigate "cases of deprivation of liberty imposed arbitrarily." According to Pivot's

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Pivot calls for public review

Pivot Legal Society has called for a public review of the police complaints process after the recent RCMP investigation into allegations of widespread misconduct by Vancouver Police Department (VPD) officers.

Concerns were raised in a press conference held by Pivot on April 4. At the press conference Pivot and the BC Civil Liberties Association responded to Chief Constable Jamie Graham's *Statement to the Media* (released March 31) and accompanying *Investigative Findings* into the RCMP investigation of 60 separate complaints of misconduct by VPD officers.

The Police Complaint Commissioner ordered



John Conroy and Katrina Pacey ask to see the original RCMP report as provided to the Vancouver Police.

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MPs meet with sex workers & Pivot

Sex workers at an in camera Pivot-hosted event strongly advocated for a change in laws surrounding the sex trade during a meeting with federal MPs on March 29. The visit to Vancouver by the parliamentary subcommittee on the solicitation laws was part of a tour of Canadian cities by the MPs who were seeking input on changes to the criminal laws surrounding prostitution.

Pivot was one of the main organizations to make submissions to the MPs as part of a

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Katrina Pacey talking to federal MP Art Hanger after their first meeting at the Coast Plaza Hotel.

Paul Ryan

Paul Ryan

MPs meet sex workers & Pivot

continued from front page

roundtable at the Coast Plaza Hotel. At the evening event, workers from all areas of the trade, including street level, escort and massage parlour workers, shared their views and life experiences in an intimate and respectful manner said Cristen Gleeson, lawyer and coordinator of Pivot's sex work law reform project. "For many of the sex workers present, this was the first opportunity they had to speak directly to law makers about the laws that impugn them. The energy in the room was intense and emotional, as sex workers opened up to the MPs about what life is like for them working under the current criminal laws." Gleeson, who acted as a facilitator added, "The event was one of the most unique and powerful that I have ever been part of. The MPs were clearly moved by what they were hearing from sex workers and could see the level of harm, stigmatization and discrimination created by these laws. It was thrilling to see those most impacted by the criminal laws sharing with those who have the power to change them in an atmosphere of mutual sharing and respect."

On the street.

Pivot found that the communicating law, the bawdy house law, and some aspects of the procuring law not only violate the liberty interests of sex workers, but also violate their right to personal security and equality, as protected by Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.



Barry Cahoon

Gleeson thanked the sex workers present for their bravery in speaking to MPs. "It is difficult for anyone to be comfortable speaking with members of government in such a direct manner. The fact that sex workers not only came out to speak but also shared experiences that were personal and also painful for them really shows

their bravery and their commitment to seeing change. The MPs present thanked sex workers for sharing with them and were visibly moved by the people they had met and what they had seen and heard." Lindsay, a sex worker, said, "We waited for three years for the opportunity to speak to the subcommittee and it finally happened. I could see that the MPs understood the dangerous nature of the working conditions we face and understood that it is the criminal laws that make our working conditions so dangerous and sometimes life-threatening."

'Voices' report spurs action

Minister of Justice Irwin Cotler made the commitment to reconvene the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws after receiving Pivot Legal Society's March 2004 *Voices for Dignity* report, which questioned the constitutionality of the Criminal Code's provisions on prostitution.

Katrina Pacey stressed the importance of input of local sex workers: "In 2003, Pivot worked with street-level sex workers in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) gathering evidence about the conditions created by the current criminal laws relating to prostitution. Based on the expert opinions of 91 sex workers, Pivot found that the communicating law, the bawdy house law, and some aspects of the procuring law not only violate the liberty interests of sex workers, but also violate their right to personal security and equality, as protected by Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. These laws need to be repealed."

Several of the witnesses that have gone before the subcommittee in other cities have been hesitant to support decriminalization, suggesting that it does not deal with issues such as sexual exploitation of youth and trafficking. Pacey, nevertheless, remains confident. "Repealing the criminal laws relating to adult prostitution is not a silver bullet, but it is an immediate action that the Federal government should take in order to begin to reduce the dangerous conditions that sex workers currently face and begin to uphold their constitutional rights. Sex workers should be afforded the same labour and human rights

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VPD cover up - from front page

an external investigation into the complaints after Pivot successfully argued that Chief Graham was biased. After the external investigation was completed, VPD Chief Graham acted outside his jurisdiction when he re-investigated the complaints and reversed all nine “substantiated” findings by the RCMP. Graham said that the official RCMP investigation into the allegations of police misconduct “concluded that there was not a single case of criminal activity by a Vancouver police officer.”

The actual report, which was summarized by the VPD in its press release, was in line with monthly progress reports given to Pivot by the RCMP during the investigation. These reports suggested problems with the VPD’s handling of marginalized persons’ property and internal investigations.

Pivot Legal Society director, John Conroy, QC, said that Pivot lawyers were troubled with Chief Graham’s findings and actions. “Justice has not been served for many of the marginalized individuals who were victims of police misconduct.” Pivot is calling for the release of the RCMP report and a public review of the flaws of the complaints process, including Chief Graham’s ability to reverse the external investigation’s findings, lack of transparency affecting the public and complainants, as well as widespread non-cooperation by both witness and respondent VPD officers.

“Our next course of action will be to encourage the release of the RCMP report. A public review of the complaints process and the chief’s actions and findings is particularly important now that he has attempted to controvert the findings of the independent investigation ordered by the Complaints Commissioner without releasing the independent report itself,” said Conroy.

The RCMP uncovered evidence of “assault” and “abuse of authority.” It recommended an audit be done into the property department of the VPD to determine how much money has been seized without charges being laid and what steps have been taken to return the money. It also un-

Welcome to The Pivot Post!

We had long dreamed of publishing a high-quality newsletter, but it had to wait until magazine publisher Paul Ryan began volunteering for Pivot two months ago. Thanks to his hard work and the steady support of our volunteers and sponsors, we finally have The Pivot Post which we hope will become a powerful way of raising awareness about issues of human rights and empowerment.

John Richardson, Executive Director, Pivot Legal Society

covered evidence of systemic problems with the VPD’s internal investigation process, including lack of supervision, stalling, and that the VPD’s complaint intake process was not respecting the Police Act.

“If this investigation was an open and transparent one, why has the VPD not released the RCMP report into the 60 complaints against the VPD?” asked Conroy, adding, “Chief Jamie Graham’s failure to release the RCMP report raises questions about the credibility of his investigation.”

The non-cooperation by VPD officers with the investigation made it difficult to substantiate many of the claims made in Pivot’s original affidavit report. Fifty-four percent of named officers and 69 percent of the witness officers failed to cooperate with the police complaint process.

Pivot’s affidavit campaign arose out of meetings in 2001 between lawyers and low-income residents of the DTES to discuss legal issues affecting people in the neighbourhood. Residents alleged widespread misconduct by police officers, and Pivot began taking sworn statements to document problems with policing. In October 2002, Pivot released *To Serve and Protect*, which analyzed legal issues arising out of 50 affidavits and made recommendations for systematic change.

The final report resulting from the RCMP investigation was given to the local discipline authority, in accordance with the Police Act, which in this case was VPD Chief Graham. As discipline authority, Graham was responsible for reviewing the evidence in the RCMP report, making findings of guilt or innocence, and handing out penalties against officers. ●

Remembering missing women

Not forgotten. A group of women visiting the memorial stone in Stanley Park in memory of the more than 60 missing women from Vancouver. The women's disappearance is widely regarded as one of the main reasons for the parliamentary subcommittee on solicitation laws visit to Vancouver.

Aurora Johnson



About 1000 local people walked through the local streets of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside on February 14. The 14th Annual Women's Memorial March was held in memory of the more than 60 local women who disappeared in the past 15 years and was preceded by a series of speeches by friends and family members of the 32 women whose remains were found on Pickton's farm and of the 40 women who are still missing.

The march paused for a few minutes at the spots along the roads where the women, many of whom were sex workers, were last seen by friends.

Those walking were given a program expressing thoughts and prayers for the families of those who were known to be murdered and those who are still missing.

The following women are now alleged to have been murdered:

Andrea Borhaven, Andrea Joesbury, Angela Jardine, Brenda Wolfe, Cara Ellis, Cindy Feliks, Dawn Theresa Crey, Debra Jones, Diane Melnick, Dianne Rock, Georgina Papin, Heather Bottomley, Heather Chinnock, Helen Hallmark, Inga Hall, Jacqueline McDonell, Jennifer Furinger, Kerry Koski, Marcella Creison, Marnie Frey, Mona Wilson, Patricia Johnson, Sarah Jean DeVries, Sereena Abotsway, Sherry Irving, Tanya Holyk, Teresa Williams, Tiffany Drew, Wendy Crawford, Yvonne Boen, and 3 as yet unidentified women known only

as Jane Doe. **The following women are still unaccounted for:** Angela Arseneault, Cara Ellis, Catherine Gonzalez, Cindy Beck, Danielle Larue, Delphine Nikal, Dorothy Spence, Elaine Allenbach, Elaine Dumba, Elizabeth Chalmers, Elsie Sebastian, Frances Young, Gloria Fedyshyn, Ingrid Soet, Janet Henry, Jacqueline Murdoch, Julie Young, Katherine Knight, Kathleen Wattley, Lana Derrick, Laura Mah, Leigh Miner, Lenora Olding, Lillian O'Dare, Linda Grant, Marilyn Moore, Marie Laliberte, Mary Lands, Michelle Gurney, Nancy Clark, Nicole Hoar, Olivia William, Rebecca Guno, Richard "Kellie" Little, Ruby Hardy, Sharon Abraham, Sharon Goselin, Sharon Ward, Sherry Baker, Sheryl Donohue, Sheila Egan, Sherry Rail, Stephanie Lane, Tammy Fairbairn, Tania Peterson, Teresa Triff, Verna Littlechief, Wendy Allen, Yvonne Abigosis.

Some names have not been added to this list which was compiled by the Women's Memorial March Committee.

UN to meet with Pivot *continued from front page*

executive director John Richardson, the working group contacted Pivot after reading reports published on the website www.pivotlegal.org. The UNCHR group intends to explore the following issues with regards to Canada:

- arrest and detention of drug users and sex workers;
- racial profiling in law enforcement and criminal justice;
- specialised courts to deal with drug using offenders and offenders with mental health issues;
- detention of illegal immigrants, including detention of women trafficked into Canada; and
- the 1996 sentencing reform, of Canada's prison population rate since then, restorative justice initiatives and criminal sanction alternatives to deprivation of freedom. ●

Empowerment through calendar sales

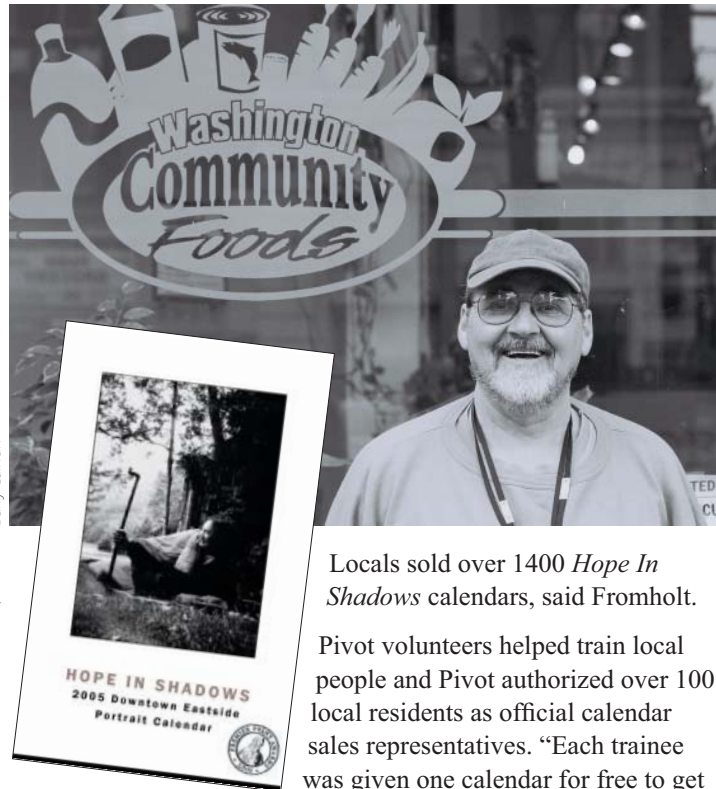
One of Pivot's most well-known empowerment and public education campaigns has been the Downtown Eastside (DTES) photography contest which resulted in the 2004 and 2005 calendars.

The 2005 calendar was sold at over 100 retail locations across the city. Project coordinator Rita Fromholt says that this level of support was encouraging and demonstrated the tremendous support Pivot received from the larger Vancouver community. "The concept of marketing a calendar full of photographs by street-involved people may sound strange to some, but many retailers embraced the idea and were proud to be a part of such an innovative project."

"Many of our retailers sold the calendars on consignment, with some of them donating 100 percent of the sale price back to Pivot. These remarkable retailers include three of our biggest sellers – Mountain Equipment Co-op, Uprising Breads and Chapters on Robson Street."

Images for the calendars were collected after Pivot gave away two hundred disposable black and white cameras to low-income residents of the DTES. Participants were asked to document images in their lives over three days, with a focus on the themes of compassion, joy, struggle, courage, faith and friendship. Of the thousands of images produced, 40 winning photographs (16 of which were used in the calendar) were chosen by a jury of professional photographers, with cash prizes issued to winners.

According to John Richardson the profile of Pivot's work to help marginalized people in the DTES has been raised considerably because of the 10,000 calendars printed and distributed in Vancouver and throughout Canada, in both 2004 and 2005.



Left: Danny Sklaz-eski in front of Washington Community Foods on East Hastings St. The Washington acted as a distribution centre for locals who sold calendars and has provided affordable goods since 1973. Until 2003 it operated out of the nearby Downtown Community Health Clinic.

Inset: The 2005 calendar, Hope In Shadows, featured photographs taken by locals.

Locals sold over 1400 *Hope In Shadows* calendars, said Fromholt.

Pivot volunteers helped train local people and Pivot authorized over 100 local residents as official calendar sales representatives. "Each trainee was given one calendar for free to get them going. They could then purchase additional calendars for \$10 each from one of three DTES distribution locations. While many trainees only sold a handful of calendars, some become real entrepreneurs. These 'ambassadors' of the DTES were very creative in selling calendars on the street in front of business, at Skytrain stations, from business-to-business, and through family and friends." •

Thank you to the following retailers who donated 100% of their calendar profits to Pivot

Oscar's Art Books Broadway and Kerrisdale, Electric Internet, Uprising Breads Bakery, Mountain Equipment Coop, La Luna Café, The Room (Arbutus St), Higher Grounds, Coast Capital (Vancouver), Simon's Bike Shop, Pure Radiant Energy, Festival Box Office, Choices (Yaletown), Chapters (Robson St), Beau Photo Supplies, Behind the Scenes, Arbutus Real Food Market.

Advocating change

*Founded in late 2000, Pivot Legal Society is a leading advocate for marginalized people such as drug addicts, sex trade workers and the homeless and has focused its efforts in the heart of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), the poorest neighbourhood in Canada. Pivot founder **John Richardson** writes about what Pivot is hoping to achieve.*

The problem Pivot is attempting to solve is that of marginalization, and its attendant harms, both subtle and gross, upon the quality of life of everyone in society. The impacts of the marginalization are felt most cruelly by those directly affected: illegal drug addicts, sex workers, homeless people, First Nations' people, and others. However, the negative impacts of marginalization are not restricted to those directly affected.

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is the poorest neighbourhood in Canada.



Barry Calhoun

Everyone in society loses when a fellow citizen is reduced to a survival existence, unable to reach his or her full potential. Most obviously, there is the loss of that person's potential social and economic contribution. There is the sickness and crime that follow from extreme vulnerability and poverty. More indirectly, the security and quality of life of everyone is reduced by the possibility of marginalization happening to themselves or someone they care about, through accident, disease, or ill-fortune. Perhaps most importantly, a social curtain is drawn between those who have and those who need. This partition is felt in the hearts and minds of everyone, creating patterns of fear, aversion, intolerance, and contempt. These emotions do not simply prevent individuals from opening their hearts: as a cultural

phenomenon, they prevent us from achieving a society that is truly inclusive, supportive, and compassionate.

The impacts of marginalization are felt in every city and town in Canada. However, its shadow is cast into sharpest relief in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES). The poorest postal code in the country according to Statistics Canada, the DTES is a social crucible for Canada on addiction, policing, housing, and prostitution. It is a problem, a challenge and an opportunity. Solve the problems of the DTES, and you are on your way to solving problems of marginalization across Canada.

Social prejudices

Marginalization is a direct outcome of our social values. These values express themselves in many subtle but all-pervading ways through the legislative framework that governs our society. Unfortunately, social norms are often confused as ethics. Prejudiced beliefs are strongly held. There is often a belief that the benefits of the law should go to those who are "morally deserving," a path of reasoning which often eliminates those who by mental disability, behavioural anomalies, addiction, or base poverty do not attract the sympathies of those in positions of institutional power and influence.

Canada has a Charter of Rights and laws that can be used to promote the health, well-being, and safety of marginalized persons as well as challenge the causes of marginalization. Laws that enable or support marginalization can be framed in conflict with more fundamental principles within our legal system, and if challenged aggressively, the legal manifestations of prejudiced and unfair social attitudes can be overturned. The last 100 years have seen major strides in challenging discriminatory laws for women, racial minorities, gays and lesbians, and disabled people. However, due to their poverty and lack of integration, the situation of society's most impoverished and disenfranchised groups has seen little change.

Although legal remedies for marginalization exist, the laws protecting rights and entitlements make many assumptions about the functionality, knowledge, and resources of those requiring protection. In reality, marginalized people are poorly integrated into the structures of mainstream society and rarely in a position to effectively participate in the formal processes necessary to challenge those structures. Without financial resources, and without a means to strategically and effectively advocate on their own behalf before government and the courts, marginalized persons often cannot obtain the benefits of the socially progressive developments in the law enacted during the last century.

Traditional approach not enough

Politicians and legislators have the greatest power over the lives of marginalized people, through setting economic and social priorities. Unfortunately, there is little mainstream political capital in challenging the widely held social attitudes that create the conditions for marginalization. Even the political left, traditionally focused on the interests of the working poor, often overlooks or ignores the concerns of marginalized persons.

Service organizations such as food banks and temporary shelters are critical in protecting marginalized people from the worst impacts of poverty. However, such organizations, while invaluable, address the symptoms rather than the causes of marginalization. Mental and physical illness, social isolation, drug addiction, and sexual exploitation remain prevalent. Although the charitable service model has been the traditional way of addressing poverty and hardship in North America, in its long history it has failed to effectively challenge the systemic institutional causes of marginalization.

Legal aid and advocacy clinics follow a similar model as service organizations, although in the context of the law. Such clinics are an important service, providing legal representation to individuals who lack the financial means to retain lawyers on their own. Unfortunately, legal aid has undergone drastic funding reductions in the last two years in BC. Even without funding cuts,

DTES facts and figures

- 20% of homeless people are aboriginal
- 33% of homeless people have mental illnesses
- 66% of homeless people have drug or alcohol addictions.
- 5,000 injection drug users reside within the 10 city blocks of the DTES core
- 21% of injection drug users report childhood sexual abuse
- 30% of injection drug users have a mental illness
- 30% of injection drug users have HIV/AIDS
- 90% of injection drug users have Hepatitis C.

Addicted sex workers represent the outside fringe of marginalization. Backgrounds that include childhood sexual abuse, abandonment, poverty, addiction and mental illness are overlaid with exploitation by pimps, traffickers and clients. Disproportionately harmed, the incidence of HIV/AIDS among women in the DTES is 40% higher than that of men.

however, the focus of such clinics on individual problems rather than on the systemic causes of those problems means that demand for their services never decrease, no matter how successful they are.

Using the law strategically

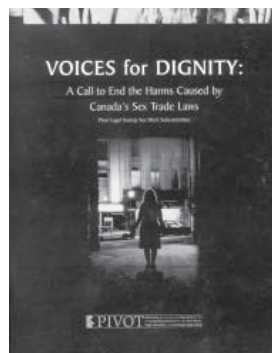
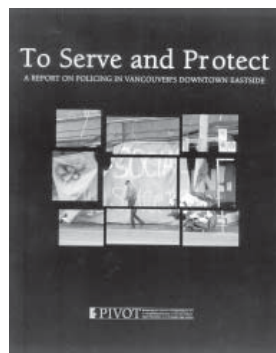
Law is a critical tool for social change, because it is through the law that we regulate our civil society. Approaching social change with the tools of the law can create systemic and robust impacts on the way society is governed. Pivot's legal strategy includes three tactics:

- **Legal education** projects are aimed not only at educating marginalized people, but also educating other groups about those rights. In each case, tailoring the communication to the target group is critical.
- **Strategic legal action** describes a range of legal initiatives, from formal correspondence to civil litigation, aimed at challenging barriers to the rights of marginalized persons.
- **Law reform** includes research on policy and administrative reforms as well as legislative changes that would enable lasting improvements to the social and legal status of marginalized persons.

The idea behind Pivot is that a crucial fulcrum of social change is to be found by advancing the interests of those at the margins. There is an important difference between "advancing interests" and

continued on next page

To Serve and Protect and Voices for Dignity were produced by the Pivot Legal Society as part of its efforts to advance the interests of Vancouver's marginalized people through strategic legal action.



Advocating change - from page 7

“providing charity.” Pivot accepts as a principle that marginalized people are the ultimate authorities on the problems they face, and seeks to address those problems proactively. Like a lawyer to a client, Pivot uses community research and documentation, through legal affidavits and focus groups, to empower marginalized persons to raise their voice and assert their interests. For Pivot, creating opportunities for marginalized people to take control over the definition of their interests is the first step towards improving their lives in a substantive and meaningful way.

What is new about this idea?

The key idea behind Pivot is that using legal tools to strategically advance the interests of marginalized persons will create positive and lasting outcomes not only for those directly affected, but also, in a far-reaching way, for everyone else in society. Pivot's focus on using outreach and empowerment to create an advocacy relationship with marginalized persons as a group distinguishes it from charitable service models, such as the Salvation Army as well as more general rights organizations, such as civil liberties associations.

Pivot Legal Society addresses the problem of social marginalization and its attendant impacts by using the law to strategically challenge the systemic forces that push people to the edges of society. Pivot is now a locally and internationally-recognized human rights organization; having received the Award for Excellence in Human Rights and HIV/AIDS by Human Rights Watch and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, and having been recognized two years running by

Vancouver magazine as one of the most influential non-profit organizations in the city.

Some of our successes over the past four years include *Voices for Dignity* and *To Serve and Protect*, (October 2002) which documented 50 affidavits alleging police misconduct in Vancouver's DTES.

Pivot efforts in the areas of addiction have included three legal campaigns to support and protect harm reduction initiatives for drug users: a health drop-in centre for addicts, a peer-run needle exchange, and the first openly operated safe injection site, the precursor to North America's first official safe injection site now operated by the Health Authority. In the area of housing, Pivot provided legal support and ongoing representation to the more than 200 homeless people camped around the vacant Woodward's building in the DTES. The tents that lined the sidewalk functioned as overflow shelters for the homeless, and the encampment became a rallying cry for greater access to social housing.

Beyond Vancouver

The key advantage of using the law as a tool for advancing the interests of marginalized persons is that the impact of legal victories is not limited to the parties directly involved.

All Canadians are affected by legislation of municipal, provincial, or national jurisdiction, and any successful legal challenges or law reforms on behalf of residents of the DTES will benefit all persons affected by that legislation. For example, Pivot's prostitution law reform campaign is based exclusively upon the affidavits of sex workers who live in Vancouver's DTES. However, the Criminal Code provisions that prohibit prostitution-related activities affect sex workers across the country. Thus, if Pivot's campaign for decriminalization of the sex trade is successful – either through a constitutional challenge or through political lobbying – sex workers across Canada will benefit. ●

To Serve and Protect & Voices for Dignity are available in pdf format to download from www.pivotlegal.org, or in print format from Pivot Legal Society, phone 604 696-1322.

MPs meet with sex workers - from page 2

protections as other workers and decriminalization is a critical step towards that goal.”

A former sex-worker and co-author of *Voices for Dignity* said sex workers should have as much input as possible. “If we want effective legal reform, sex workers need to be involved directly, on their own terms, in any process dealing with changes to laws that affect them.”

The Subcommittee’s report won’t be released until June, but Pacey says that the existence of the Subcommittee and their hearings have played an important role in public education. “Confidentiality and cooperation with the sex work community were integral to our ability to do this project” said Pacey. “Giving sex workers here the chance to have

their opinion’s heard by the Parliamentary Subcommittee was one of the main reasons we wrote *Voices for Dignity*.”

International interest

In addition to the upcoming visit from the parliamentarians, Pivot was invited to discuss the *Voices for Dignity* findings at the International Harm Reduction Conference, in Belfast, Northern Ireland last month. Elin Sigurdson, a member of the sex work law reform project steering committee, currently on exchange in the Netherlands, went to Belfast for Pivot. •

Contact: Cristen Gleeson 604 443-5678 or Katrina Pacey 604 729-7849. Read *Voices for Dignity* on www.pivotlegal.org

**TOP 10 REASONS TO SUPPORT PIVOT**

1. Pivot’s use of the legal system as the tool of social change allows for robust victories that have wide-spread, systemic benefits for all people.
2. Pivot’s focused strategic approach maximizes resources by addressing the most critical problems with the greatest potential for change.
3. Pivot’s large, talented volunteer base means that financial contributions are leveraged many times over through donations of professional services.
4. Pivot’s proven ability to use the mass media as a means of public education creates the conditions for social and political change.
5. Pivot’s commitment to the personal empowerment of marginalized persons encourages individuals to make choices to improve their own lives.
6. Pivot’s close integration and consultation with residents of the Downtown Eastside means that its objectives are clear, informed and relevant.
7. Pivot’s multi-faceted legal, media, and empowerment campaigns operate synergistically, making its efforts for change very high-impact.
8. Pivot’s independence from government funding gives it the freedom to undertake aggressive campaigns for law reform and institutional change.
9. Pivot’s organizational structure creates distinct revenue streams for political and charitable activities, allowing both under a common mandate.
10. Pivot’s integrates its objectives into its methods by emphasizing respect, compassion, integrity, courage, empowerment and impact.



Advancing the interests and improving the lives of marginalized persons through law reform, legal education, and strategic legal action.

Tel. 604 696-1322

www.pivotlegal.org

Ian and Barb Macnaughton will take their South American trip, provided by GAP Adventures, in May.

Machu Picchu bound



Paul Ryan

Ian and Barb Macnaughton were the lucky Pivot supporters to receive tickets for a 15-day guided trip for two to the Inca Trail, the Amazon, and Lake Titicaca in March.

The Macnaughtons had their name drawn from all those who pledged to become monthly donors to Pivot to win a trip generously donated by GAP Adventures and the Illahie Foundation. Their free holiday includes a trek along the ancient pathways to Machu Picchu, exploring the Amazon jungle and experiencing Peru's colourful markets and fascinating cultures, past and present. Airfares, lodgings, local transportation, tour guides and some meals were included in this generous package. "We are so absolutely delighted to be awarded this marvelous prize, Barb mentioned that she had dreamed of this trip for 40 years!" said Ian Macnaughton, "Thank you for the incredible work that you do, we are both proud and humbled to be a part of that work."

The trip to Machu Picchu was drawn from among the names of more than 70 Pivot supporters who had pledged to support Pivot Legal Society with monthly donations. The Machu Picchu prize draw was part of Pivot's ongoing campaign to build a foundation of core funding support to sustain its ongoing operations.

"We are very happy at this opportunity to offer something back to the people who have supported us in such an important way," said John Richardson, executive director of Pivot. "And we are looking forward to having more draws in the future!"

IN BRIEF

Auction success

The total amount raised by the Christmas auction was more than \$10,000, as well as over \$650 in monthly pledges said organiser Lorinda Earl: "We were very pleased with the result - thank you to all the donors."

Progress with legal coop

Pivot has formed a development team to create the business plan and corporate model for Canada's first ever legal cooperative. Four meetings have been held to date to examine issues around the potential market, the mandate of the coop, and technical legal issues regarding delivering services through a cooperative structure. The Coop Wine and Cheese evening, held at the Vancity boardroom in February, was attended by about 50 lawyers, articulated students and volunteers.

For more information about the coop, contact Iqbal Alam at Iqbal@pivotlegal.org.

Chenery shooting update

On February 18 Pivot learned that it was successful in arguing for a Coroner's Inquest into the death of Gerald Chenery. The inquest will be held in September.

Woodward private prosecution result

Crown Counsel is waiting to decide whether to approve charges against two Vancouver Police Department officers accused of assaulting 74 year-old Robert Woodward. Woodward states that he was sitting in his car taking Tylenol when the officers pulled him out and threw him against the wall, causing serious injuries. Woodward filed the charges with the help of lawyer Howard Rubin, and Crown Counsel forwarded the file to Vancouver Police for investigation. Two witnesses have given their evidence, and police have sent their report to Crown Counsel, who will make its decision by the end of the month.

Pivot kicks off housing initiative

Since 1998, when there was estimated to be more than 800 homeless in Vancouver with only 400 temporary beds in overnight shelters, homelessness has risen nearly 300 percent.

Pivot is responding to this crisis with a housing workshop and affidavit campaign, generously funded by the recently announced \$20,000 starter grant from Vancouver Foundation.

The main housing problems

For members of Vancouver's marginalized communities fortunate enough to have a place to sleep, it's a daily battle to keep it. Issues the city's poorest residents face include:

Guest Fees. Despite being illegal, some landlords of downtown east side "hotels" charge residents guest fees every time a person visits. Guest fees can be as high as \$20, but are most often around \$10 per visit. Imagine paying \$10 every time you wanted your spouse, or a friend, to come to your apartment!

The failure of social assistance to cover rent costs. The Social Planning and Research Council of BC estimated that 2002 social assistance levels only covered 45 per cent of the minimum living costs for a single person – a study completed before recent government cuts to social assistance.

Runaway rent increases. Changes to the Residential Tenancy Act mean that landlords can now increase rents, without arbitration, by 4.6 per cent – or more, with arbitration – per year. As Vancouver's housing boom continues, fueled by the upcoming Olympics, many owners of residential hotels are seeking to upgrade these buildings at the expense of their low-income tenants.

Pivot workshops

The housing workshops will serve two functions. First, they will provide an opportunity for the real experts in the causes of Vancouver's housing crisis – the people living the daily struggle



Homelessness in Vancouver has risen by over 300 percent since 1998.

Barry Calhoun

of keeping a roof overhead – to tell decision makers what the housing problems are, and how to fix them. This information will be recorded in sworn affidavits, legal documents that can be used as evidence in court.

In addition to collecting information from Vancouver's housing crisis experts, the housing workshops will provide attendees with the knowledge they need to begin taking action to ensure what few housing rights they have left are protected.

With Pivot facilitating dialogue between those caught in the housing crunch and the people with the power to make their lives better, there's no limit to the positive change that the housing workshops can bring to Vancouver's poorest residents! • by David Eby.

If you are interested in volunteering with the Housing Workshop and Affidavit Campaign project, please contact David Eby at david@pivotlegal.org.

The Pivot Post was sponsored by:



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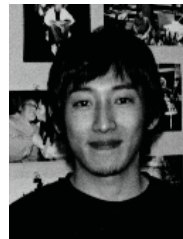
Pivot Legal Society, 4438 Stn Terminal
Vancouver, BC V6B 3Z8

www.pivotlegal.org

Meet a few of our team



Francois Paradis was born and raised in Ottawa. He has studied criminology at Ottawa and Simon Fraser Universities. He has now been with Pivot since October 2004 and will be attending law school in the fall of 2005.



Taiji Hatano, a law student from Osaka, Japan, volunteered for two months in February and March. Thank you Taiji and also to **Tobias Nautsch**, a student from Germany who helped Pivot in January and February.

The following people gave their time to help produce **The Pivot Post**: Elaine Ryan, Cristen Gleeson, Rita Fromholt, Louise Docherty, David Eby, Katrina Pacey and John Richardson.

Coming issues...

Before we put this newsletter together we asked several hundred current supporters what they would like to see. While we haven't been able to cover everything in this first issue, we hope to be able to address some of the following topics over the course of the next year. Here are some comments we received:

"The DTES is a community with impressive social structures. If you highlight them you might change other peoples' views of the DTES."

"Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Advocates (KAYA) have been working for a few months with the police and aboriginal youth to identify challenges with policing of Aboriginal youth (harassment, intimidation, assumptions and stereotypes). They, along with Arrows to Freedom Cultural Healing Society are holding a consultation with Aboriginal youth to compile a booklet called **Know Your Rights** - you might want to connect with them."

What do you think of The Pivot Post? What should we include in the next issue? Let us know: e-mail paul@pivotlegal.org

NEXT ISSUE'S DEADLINE IS MAY 31