

# MYTHS

# REALITIES

**Wife battering is a private matter.**

Wife battering is *Assault*. Assault is a *Crime*. The Criminal Code (Canada) defines assault as causing bodily harm to another person or threatening to harm a person. Every citizen has the right to freedom from assault or from fear of assault.

**Wife beating is rare.**

It is estimated that in 1978, 50,000 women in Canada suffered sufficient abuse to seek outside help. *There are 10 unreported cases for every call by a battered wife to the police.* In Edmonton, WIN HOUSE accommodated 465 women and 909 children in 1985. Another 463 were turned away due to lack of space.

**Wife beating occurs only in low income families.**

Wife beating crosses all income and geographical lines. It spans *all ages, races, nationalities and educational levels.*

**Wife beating occurs infrequently and is rarely severe.**

It is seldom a one-time occurrence. Most battered women are beaten regularly. Most beatings increase in frequency and severity. *Beating can lead to permanent physical and mental disability or death.* It seldom gets better.

**Men beat their wives only when they are drunk. Wife beaters are alcoholics.**

While alcohol and drug abuse is a factor in about half the cases of beatings, *many men are sober when they assault their wives.* Not all drinking or alcoholic men batter their wives.

**Women 'ask for it'. They provoke men in quarrels.**

Most women are beaten *for no reason and without warning.* Stress, conflict, arguments, quarrels and differences are part of any relationship. Pregnancy, added family responsibility and employment problems are key stress factors. Anger and frustration may result. Violence is never an appropriate answer.

**Battered wives like it or they wouldn't stay. They must be 'sick'.**

Battered wives stay in relationships for many reasons. Many hope to change a man they love. He may at other times be genuinely penitent, loving and generous. Women may feel they are to blame and try to change. They don't want to admit the marriage is a failure. They feel loyal, ashamed, isolated or unique. But most of all, *women stay because they have nowhere to go.* They are trapped.

**Family violence is a modern day problem.**

People who have experienced family violence in their childhood tend to accept violence as a method to resolve conflict, and so *family violence continues from generation to generation.*