

# Rape: A seven per cent solution?

by Marianne Van Loone of *The Peak*

One out of four Canadian women will be sexually assaulted at some time in her life. And every seventeen minutes there is a rape in this country.

Rape is one of the most extreme acts of violence inflicted on women by men. It can happen to any woman, regardless of her age, marital status, class, or physical appearance. Opportunity seems to be the key factor.

"She happened to be close at hand. Saying she was attractive was no justification. I don't think looks had anything to do with it," explains a convicted rapist in *This*

Medical attention should be received, both to ensure the woman's well being and for legal evidence of the crime. All details which the victim can remember should be written down.

Rape Relief staff will accompany the victim and act as advocates during questioning and later during the trial if the woman wishes. They also offer counseling and referrals, information, support education and action groups.

The rape victim has no control over her own self, not only during the rape, but too often afterwards, if she decides to go to court.

If the victim reports to the

Fewer still result in arrest.

Time drags on. There is a hearing to set bail, and then a preliminary hearing to determine if the case will be tried.

The woman is put on the witness stand and cross examined. The accused is not. Information regarding her past sexual experiences may be allowed in court. Information regarding the accused's past sexual history, including any unsuccessful previous accusations of rape, is not permissible. And the victim is represented by an appointed crown attorney, who she probably has never seen before the day of the court appearance, while the

prisons. And many become repeat offenders.

In total, it is estimated only 7 out of 10 per cent of all rapes result in conviction. The woman suffers not only the trauma related to the actual rape, but that inflicted by the entire legal system should she choose to press charges.

If the woman decides not to prosecute, Vancouver Rape Relief can file a third party report for her. She remains anonymous, but police still have a record of the crime for future investigations.

There are alternatives to the legal system. Postering the area in which the rape occurred to warn others is one. Another alternative is non-violent confrontation of the rapist. Since 75 per cent of all rapes are committed by someone who is previously known by the victim, this is often feasible.

Confrontation involves rehearsals of what the woman wishes to say to the rapist, in the company of a group of people. Both Vancouver Rape Relief and

Men Against Rape may be involved' as well as friends of the victim. When the woman feels ready, the rapist is confronted in a place such as his work or his home.

"The man knows he is not anonymous — others know, and he will be watched," say Mills and Lea. Information on Men Against Rape is left for him. There have been a few cases where the rapist re-assessed his behaviour and later contacted this organization to try and change, but the main value of the confrontation is that the woman regains control of her self.

Vancouver Rape Relief offers advice on how to avoid rape. Emotional and physical self defense are useful. Restrictive clothing can inhibit movement and running if it becomes necessary. Women should be aware of the people and cars around them, and report to police any cars that harass or follow them. And, "always try and be in control of situations where sexual confrontation could happen — on all levels from casual to intimate."

"Rape may be increasing" say Mills and Lea, "although it may just be that more women are coming out." Economic depression and the conservative views of the moral majority may be contributing to an increase. To reverse this trend, both men and women must examine their roles. It is very important to be aware of these roles in the upbringing of children. The entire legal system, which treats women as less than human, must be changed, as well as the prison system which is ineffective.

And, the society as a whole, which allows this behaviour, must change. Until rape is eradicated, it will remain a part of every woman's reality.



## Film Is About Rape.

Our conceptions of the rapist as a sick sex pervert are untrue.

"There is no stereotype. Rapists are the actors out of the cultural value system. They are an exaggeration," says the film. "When they fall short of their expectations they choose to act out to reinforce their masculinity, through sexual dominance. For a brief period of time the rapist is powerful, he is in control."

"Rape is a behavior. It must be seen in a societal context. Some men choose to rape, some do not," say Maureen Mills and Judy Lea of Vancouver Rape Relief. No woman chooses to be raped. But the possibility is part of every woman's reality.

Approximately nine out of ten rapes are unreported. This is the victim's choice. If she wishes to report it, there are several steps which should be taken immediately. The evidence must be preserved — this means do not wash or change clothes. The police should be called right away. A friend, or someone from Rape Relief, can give support to the victim.

police she must undergo a medical examination for legal evidence of rape. And she is interrogated as if she committed a crime. The police decide if the case is worth pursuing, based on the evidence available and the likelihood of a successful conviction. Only about one third of the reported cases are investigated past this point.

accused may hire his own defense lawyer. The process amounts to a trial of the woman for the crime of being raped.

If the woman is one of the seven percent who win their case, the rapist goes to jail, for a period of eight months to five years. There are no rehabilitation programs for rapists in Canadian

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