

## Purpose of The Women's Court Watch

1. To collect qualitative and quantitative data in order to compare trends in regards to the response to woman abuse by the criminal court system.
2. To observe judges' and court personnel's responses to offenders and to survivors of woman abuse.
3. To raise awareness in the community of Thunder Bay of the issue of woman abuse and our criminal court's response to these cases.
4. To empower victims of woman abuse to participate in making changes to the criminal justice system.

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“Two things need to occur to end violence against women; we need women's equality and we need to hold men accountable for their violence”

- *Thunder Bay Women's Advocate*

## Thunder Bay Women's Court Watch Program

*A joint venture of the Northwestern Ontario Women's  
Centre and Faye Peterson Transition House*

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# Thunder Bay Women's Court Watch



Research Partners with  
The University of Western Ontario's Centre for  
Research on Violence Against Women and Children

Funded by  
The Law Foundation of Ontario

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## About Women's Court Watch

The Thunder Bay Women's Court Watch Program was initiated in May of 2007 through a partnership between the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre and Faye Peterson Transition House. This initiative will coordinate women, survivors of violence, students and volunteers who will observe woman abuse cases at the Thunder Bay Provincial Court House on Arthur St..

The necessity for the Thunder Bay Women's Court Watch developed after numerous advocates working with local and regional women experiencing abuse noted repeated inconsistent and/or inappropriate response from the criminal court system.

Information which will be collected by observers includes both qualitative and quantitative data such as bail requirements put on the accused, sentencing of perpetrators, and treatment of victims by court personnel. The data, once compiled, will be compared from year to year to track changes in the court's response.

Presently the Thunder Bay Women's Court Watch Program follows criminal court cases, however it is the intention of the program to expand to include family court to collect data relating to woman abuse and custody and access decisions.

The Women's Court Watch is a research partner with the University of Western Ontario's Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, and is funded by the Law Foundation of Ontario.

## Judicial Responses That Empower Abused Women

**Prioritizing Women's Safety:** Asking about women's fears. Asking about and confiscating weapons. Training court personnel on woman abuse. Making a safe space for women to wait for hearings.

**Making the Court Hospitable to Abused Women:** Providing a separate restraining order office. Informing women of their legal options. Providing translators. Making the process and building accessible to women with disabilities.

**Addressing the Economic Aspects of Woman Abuse:** Asking whether women need child support. Connecting women with community resources around housing and financial assistance.

**Supportive Judicial Demeanor:** Listening to abused women. Recognizing the complexity of women's circumstances and choices.

**Connecting Women with Resources:** Providing advocates for abused women. Developing relationships with shelters, batterers programs, and community services.

**Taking the Violence Seriously:** Communicating through words and actions the court will not tolerate woman abuse. Encouraging women to return to court if they require further assistance.

**Focusing on the Needs of Children:** Demonstrating concern for the safety of children. Making a safe space in the courthouse for children. Recognizing the effects of woman abuse on children.

**Imposing Sanctions on Violent Men:** Imposing sanctions for violating orders. Refusing to joke and bond with violent men. Correcting institutional bias toward men. Holding men accountable for their violent behaviour.

\* Adapted from the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

## Volunteering

### Why You Should Volunteer

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- You will learn about issues of woman abuse and how they impact our community
- You will receive training on the legal system
- Your participation will increase accountability by the judicial system to survivors of woman abuse.

### Volunteer Responsibilities

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1. To attend training sessions explaining the court system, key players in court, woman abuse issues and how to use the survey tool to gather data.
2. To attend and observe woman abuse court cases (approx. 6-10 hours per month)
3. To complete the survey tool during the trial and hand in completed surveys to the Court Watch Coordinator.
4. To attend a monthly support meeting to connect with other volunteers, discuss experiences and explore training needs.