

# Building a Culture of Respect: POLICE AND SEX WORKERS



SWAN Vancouver Society  
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## RESPECT IS...

treating sex workers like people.  
encouraging positive attitudes  
and behaviours that recognize the  
importance of human dignity.

*When respect isn't  
shown at the first  
contact point, justice  
isn't possible.*

## RESPECT IS NOT...

### ...assuming you know a sex worker's story.

A sex worker tried to report exploitation and the officer insisted it was domestic violence. Dismissed and disbelieved, the sex worker attempted suicide.

Sex workers are experts in their own lives.

### ...incarcerating a robbery victim.

A sex worker was robbed and called 911. She was handcuffed and put in jail. When police realized she was not the robber, they called her a liar instead of apologizing.

Incidents such as these prevent sex workers from reporting.

### ...asking what's a nice girl like you doing in a job like this?

Morality policing enforces conservative values not the law, and reinforces stigma.

### ...referring sex workers to organizations that do not meet their needs.

When a sex worker experienced cyber-bullying and extortion, she was referred to an anti-trafficking shelter.

Sex workers deserve appropriate referrals that meet their needs.

### ...publishing a victim of crime's address in the media without her consent.

Sex workers deserve the same safety, privacy and rights as everyone else.

**\*Actual SWAN cases**

### ...presuming sex workers are liars.

Viewing an entire population as dishonest is discriminatory. Police often say "she lied to us and she lied to you too."

Learn the difference between barriers to reporting such as stigma and fear of arrest, and "lies".

## RESPECT MEANS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

### Enabling Safe Choices

Understanding condoms are a part of occupational health and safety



### Causing Harm

Using condoms as evidence of sex work even when selling sex is legal

### Protecting sex workers now

Working to increase safety in the moment



### Easing Future Investigations

Assuming sex workers' fate is death and collecting DNA to accelerate future investigations

### Life

Being able to report predators keeps sex workers alive



### Death

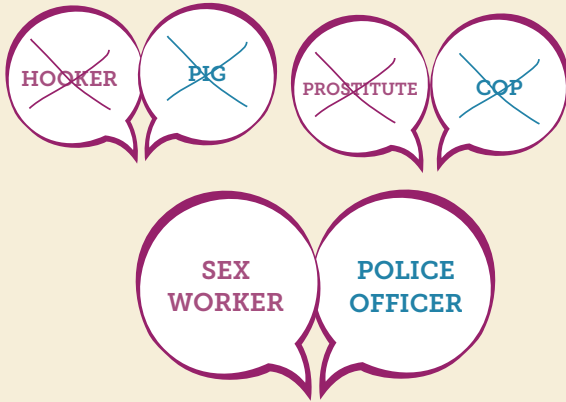
Acting with impunity, predators kill sex workers





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## RESPECT MEANS USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE



*If you are not part of the community, do not refer to adult female sex workers as "girls".*

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF A LACK OF RESPECT?



## HOW MANY OF THESE CONSEQUENCES DO YOU CONTRIBUTE TO?

STIGMA • DISTRUST • DISCRIMINATION • SECOND-GUESSING  
LOSS OF FAITH • VICTIM-BLAMING • ANTAGONISM • UNDER-REPORTING • VULNERABILITY



VIGILANTISM • TRAUMA  
ARREST • DETENTION • DEPORTATION



SUICIDE • DEATH • SERIAL MURDERS

## WHAT CAN SEX WORKERS TEACH YOU ABOUT RESPECT?

### LISTENING.

Sex workers are great listeners. Their job requires it.

### CONSENT.

Sex workers are experts at consent. Their safety hinges on it.

### PRIVACY.

Sex workers understand privacy in terms of human decency. Their livelihood depends on it.

