

# BEST OF THE BEST! MITRA CASTANO

## First female in a leadership position for Reality-Based

Mitra Castano was born in Shawrude Iran, and escaped in the late 1970s when the Islamic revolution started. The family packed one suitcase between five of them and left for Bangkok, Thailand never to see their home land ever again.

Mitra's family lived in Thailand for about four years as refugees, and then moved to Canada as immigrants in the early 1980s. Her Father wanted her to change her name to a Christian name, but even then, at a young age, she fought for things that were important to her, and fought to keep her given name to retain her heritage. Reflecting back Mitra said, "I guess you could say that because of my past, and having experienced many things starting from the age of 12, I became some what of a fighter and survivor. I fought to adapt and to fit in with my new surroundings. It was not an easy transition from my own culture and then to the Thai culture, and then again to the Westernized way of thinking. Yet I learned to live and cope in Canada."

Five years ago Mitra embraced the martial arts and made it a way of life. The positive change that it had made in her own children's lives was more than enough to convince her that this was an important investment. When her then instructor left the school that they were originally members of, Mitra and many others left as well. She soon realized that they needed their own place to train, and her then instructor was out of a teaching position, needed a place to teach, so Mitra offered her garage where they ended up training for many months. Through the heat of summer and the cold of winter, kids from all over came to train at this location. It was no frills, and no belts, but just hard training and a passion to learn the martial arts. The "Garage School" kept growing and Mitra realized that they needed a bigger space to train in. The idea of starting a school called Triunity Martial Arts Studios was conceived and it wasn't long until all of the "garage orphans" would have a fully equipped place to train, sweat, and have fun. They finally had a place they could call home Triunity Martial Arts Studios.

According to Mitra, "I found out about Jim Wagner's Reality Based Personal Protection courses that he was teaching in Surrey in August 2007. I could only commit to one class but after that one class, I was hooked and wanted more. I contacted Dallas Johnson, the Reality-Based Director in Canada at the time, and invited Jim to come to our school and teach his Level 1 courses at Triunity Martial Arts Studios. Then, in January of 2008 I became the first certified Reality-Based Personal Protection female in Canada."

Several months after the Level 1 courses Dallas Johnson resigned his position as director in order to move down to Brazil to start a new business with his wife. He had been going down there for a few summers, and they fell in love with the place. Shortly after that Mitra's business partner dissolved the partnership and moved on. These events were behind the motivation for Mitra to shift to the Jim Wagner Reality-Based Personal Protection system and to continue hosting Jim Wagner at her school. On June 19,



2008 Mitra Castano officially became the Reality-Based Personal Protection Coordinator of English speaking Canada.

Besides hosting Jim Wagner Level 1 and Level 2 courses, Mitra has a strong desire to teach the Women's Survival courses. She said, "I am thrilled to be the first and only female Reality-Based Personal Protection instructor in all of Canada. My goals with respect to self defense for women, through the knowledge that I have gained through my training with Jim Wagner, is to provide a Women's Survival at our school. Much needed attention needs to be paid to women's safety, especially after the unfortunate tragedy of the brutal, violent and senseless acts that resulted in the death of a young realtor in this area, Lyndsay Buziak, just a short time ago. Women need to be more aware of their surroundings, and not just on a physical level but we also need to pay more attention to our "inner voice". Once we have created the awareness in the women in our community on the importance of "women's safety", and how a few simple Reality-Based self-defense tactics could ultimately help save their lives, we will then provide them with the physical and the mental tools they will need in order to act, and therefore react, in any and all life threatening situations. In Jim Wagner's words, "it should not take a student years to learn self-defense, it should only take days."

**Jim Wagner will be teaching his Level 1 courses (Defensive Tactics, Ground Survival, Knife Survival, Crime Survival and Terrorism Survival at Triunity Martial Arts Studios from January 19th to January 23rd 2009. For more information and registration of these workshops please contact Mitra at 778-578-0088.**

### NESS TIPS



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