

Joint Letter from the Board of Directors & Executive Director

The 2015-16 fiscal year has been another busy time of growth and change for the BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) and we ended it by saying goodbye and thank you to our Executive Director, Catherine Talbott. As many of you know, Catherine is now Executive Director of the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV) where she continues to work with great insight and passion for the safety of women and children affected by violence. Joanne Baker took on the ED position on a permanent basis in May. While Joanne knew the organization and anti-violence sector well, there has still been much to do and learn!

Against the backdrop of organizational and political change during 2015-16, violence against women and their children continued with depressing and shameful predictability. Thankfully, just as persistently, those working in transition houses, second stage houses, safe homes, Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) and Violence is Preventable (VIP) and other anti-violence programs continued to respond to women, youth and children fleeing violence with compassion, wisdom and practical help. But they did so with constrained resources and often at personal cost to their own well-being. We acknowledge this work with great respect. We at BCSTH, we commit to honouring this work and the lived realities of those affected by violence against women through our own efforts to make a difference with advocacy, training, research and the development of resources.

This year saw the arrival of the Reaching Out with Yoga Project at BCSTH. This creative project will provide and research trauma-informed yoga programming for women and their children. In recognition of the realities of vicarious trauma for many working in this field, the project also explores the potential of trauma-informed yoga for staff too.

Over many years, BCSTH has focused its efforts on supporting inclusive practices which increase women's access to supportive services when they have experienced violence. We now have a strong collection of projects with inclusive, anti-oppressive, harm reduction approaches at their woman-centred core. Reducing Barriers concentrates on supporting those with mental health and substance use challenges (and our new Open Doors project with YWCA Canada has allowed for the Reducing Barriers training to be delivered nationally); Building Supports focuses on increasing access to safe shelter and housing for immigrant and refugee women; Increasing Access for Aboriginal Women has collected wise practices for enhancing Indigenous women's use of transition and second stage houses and safe homes. We are enthusiastic about our upcoming Annual Training Forum *Valuing Inclusion & Anti-Oppression in Practice*, which maintains this focus and highlights our commitment to progressive practice informed by intersectional feminism.

BCSTH's advocacy work on behalf of member organisations has continued at both the provincial and federal government levels. Issues we have taken on have included the Ministry of Justice's planned procurement process, the RCMP's Policing Standards for Missing Person investigations, changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and continued work with Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) in relation to the intersection of domestic violence and child protection and the impact of changes to the CFCSA. BCSTH was a lead partner in the BC Collaborates multi-partner conference in December. We also continue our work with the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses through our Board Director position.

We know that the 2016 / 2017 year will bring new opportunities and challenges to the work that we all do. We are glad to be part of a movement that continues to speak out against violence against women and shares a vision for a more peaceful and just society.

Highlights from Membership Survey

- We heard from 115 members this year, 82% of members who completed the survey were satisfied or very satisfied with their membership.
- Members emphasized training opportunities, Annual Training Forum and program supports as the three most important benefits of being a BCSTH member.
- Training – Members want more in person training opportunities in different communities. Training topics that are most sought after are Reducing Barriers to women with varying levels of mental wellness and substance use, legal issues and supporting children exposed to violence against women.
- Advocacy – We heard that advocacy for more affordable housing and funding increases to programs are crucial. Members asked us to focus on advocating for more safe/affordable housing for women and children, and press for funding increases for all programs and advocate for wage increases within the sector.
- Networking – Members want more opportunities to connect with each other and with BCSTH staff via regional meetings, conference calls and listservs.

Funders



BC Housing



Civil Forfeiture Office
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 Department of Justice
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Thank you! BC Society of Transition Houses gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.

Reaching Out with Yoga

Reaching Out with Yoga (ROWY) is a 5-year research project funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada to bring trauma-informed yoga to both the clients and the staff of BCSTH member programs. The ROWY project will roll out in three phases, the first of which (pilot phase) has begun. The pilot sites are: Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society (Revelstoke), Dixon Transition House Society (Burnaby), Westcoast Community Resources Society (Ucluelet), and Tamitik Status of Women (Kitimat). Eventually, the program will be implemented in 24 project sites throughout the province, involving Transition, Second Stage and CWWA programs.

To learn more, please visit:
www.reachingoutwithyoga.ca

Building Supports

The Building Supports project is focused on understanding the barriers to accessing secure and affordable house for Immigrant and Refugee women leaving violent relationships.

This year BCSTH completed phase two of the project. Some of highlights are: Developing a Promising Practices guide, delivery of a two and a half day in-person training in Vancouver and piloting the promising practices in 3 BC communities - Nelson (Aimee Bealieu Transition House), Nanaimo (Haven Transition House) and Surrey (Harmony Second Stage House).

Legal Toolkit

With funding from MPSSG, the Civil Forfeiture Office and in Partnership with the Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division, BCSTH developed legal resources and training materials for frontline workers responding to violence against women and children. Notable activities included:

- Consultation with BCSTH member programs via an online survey to identify areas of greatest need for legal information.
- Completion of the resource entitled, "BCSTH Legal Toolkit: General Information about Court Matters in BC", available on www.bcsth.ca.
- Hosting and recording of 2 Legal Toolkit webinars tailored to the member programs with one focused on CWWA programs and the second on Transition Houses.

CWWA Programs

With funding from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (MPSSG), BCSTH supported 95 communities across BC to deliver CWWA programming. Notable activities included:

- Surveying CWWA Counsellors about the suitability of the current program name and their views on a possible change of name.
- Advocacy work which concentrated on responding to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ)'s planned procurement process. Other activities included providing feedback on CWWA program concerns to the First Call Coalition, MCFD, MOJ and PODV.

VIP Programs

With contributions from the CKNW Orphan's Fund, 33 CWWA programs delivered Violence Is Preventable in 82 schools across BC. From September 2015-June 2016 an amazing:

- 612 presentations were delivered to children, youth and educators.
- 424 adults participated in VIP.
- 6416 students received VIP presentations or groups.
- 142 children and youth were referred or self-referred to CWWA program interventions after participating in a VIP presentation.

BCSTH would like to thank the 33 CWWA programs that went above their CWWA program deliverables to raise awareness about children's exposure to violence in the home and the impact VAW has in schools.

BCSTH Training

BCSTH continues its commitment to support frontline workers and agencies by offering trainings both online and in-person. The trainings aim to develop skills and provide tools for new and seasoned workers in their everyday work of supporting women, youth and children impacted by violence. Some of highlights are:

Online Trainings

- 136 new enrollments to BCSTH's online training community and 184 courses taken.
- 2 CWWA webinars which available on the BCSTH Youtube channel.
- A four-weeks facilitated online Reducing Barriers training.

In-Person Trainings

- Reducing Barriers for Women Fleeing Violence: Major updates and relaunch of the Reducing Barriers Training.
- 5 three-days Reducing Barriers agency trainings for 58 participants in 4 regions.
- 1 two and a half day Building Support training for transition house workers and settlement workers from 6 agencies in 3 regions.
- 1 one-day pilot training on Increasing Access to Aboriginal Women for staff and management representing 9 agencies in 5 regions.

Trainings in development

In partnership with YWCA Canada, Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses and the Canadian Women's Foundation, BCSTH is developing the Open Doors training which promotes an inclusive service model with reduced barriers to accessing transition houses and women's shelters. This training will be delivered to 6 communities nationally over the next 3 years.

BCSTH Library

The BCSTH Library has an online database of resources which are selected to support BCSTH staff and members in their work with women, children and youth. Topics of particular interest this year included mindfulness, yoga, mental wellness and substance use, immigrant and refugee women, Aboriginal women and children, and psychoeducational games and workbooks.

- 148 new hard copy and online resources were added to the library, bringing the total to 1,786.
- 796 resources were borrowed by 80 members.
- 70 member-written reviews of resources were added to the database, for a total of 284 reviews.

BC Society of Transition Houses

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