



BC Society of Transition Houses
Annual Report 2010 / 2011



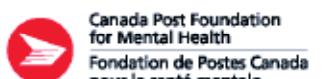
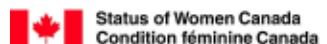


Thank You.

BCSTH gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.



Ministry of Public Safety
and Solicitor General



BC Society of Transition Houses
gratefully acknowledges the
financial support of BC Housing.

Report to the Membership on behalf of the Board of Directors

In consideration of this years' report, I have re-read last years report which speaks to uncertainty, cautiousness, and apprehension. It shouldn't amaze me; here we are again, still considering when the next RFP will occur, if we will retain our funds, and how we can stretch our dollars even further. Yet, even in this space there are so many individuals, organizations, and women that continue to commit passion and dedication to reducing and eliminating violence against women. In amongst this unease, the sector has worked diligently to bring voice to the BC Housing transition house framework in order to be inclusive of the diverse, but all necessary, perspectives of our sector across urban, rural, northern, southern and cross-cultural frameworks.

I am truly proud of the work that BCSTH has done this year as a true centre of excellence. The Reducing Barriers project has been thought provoking on meeting women where they are at in terms of the intersections between violence, substance use and mental wellness. Many questions have been asked around how we can better meet women's needs and service providers have responded diligently in order to find safe ways to do so. With expertise from around the province, safety planning for children and youth has been formalized. We have worked in partnership with the Woman Abuse Response Program at BC Women's Hospital & Health Centre to pilot groups with anti-violence and mental health workers. We are working conscientiously to try and bring about training to all areas of the province, with new technology, in recognition of the minimal training dollars available.

On a board level, this year, we have seen a change in by-laws as a means to reduce the number of positions we have while still trying to retain provincial representation. We have improved our board communication infrastructure with the development of a board Google site. This has been a fabulous addition (Thanks to our tech expert, Shabna) so that all documents are electronically housed and can be accessed by all new board members. Here's to continuity of information AND no more board binders!!!

This spring, we had the privilege of connecting with board members in Kelowna. It was an amazing opportunity to connect with a region and to gain mutual understanding and respect for each others work and roles. We are truly committed to connecting once a year with a new region, to learn from each other and, therefore, be more informed around moving the issues forward on a provincial and national level that accurately reflects the amazing work that is done around our great province. We look forward to connecting at this October's AGM/Conference and or at our next board/regional meeting in the Spring!

Amanda Alexander, Chair of the Board

Executive Director's Report

This past year has been a very busy one for BCSTH. We have been engaged in a number of activities, all with an aim to improve the lives of women and children fleeing violence, develop policy for violence against women and children, make recommendations on policy for women fleeing violence, work with government branches to represent membership issues and ultimately support our membership so that you can focus your energies on supporting the women and children you serve.

A sample of the work we have undertaken this year is:

1. Co-chaired Steering Committee for the program review of Women's Transition House programs with BC Housing.
2. Participated in the development of the Framework for Women's Transition House Programs led by BC Housing.
3. Piloted promising practices for serving women with intersecting issues of violence, mental wellness and substance use.
4. Launched our new website www.bcsth.ca.
5. Delivered 2 Aboriginal Capacity Cafes with our lower mainland partners Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver Coastal Health and Vancouver School Board.
6. Participated in the development of online domestic violence safety planning training led by the Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General and BC Housing.
7. With the support of an advisory committee, developed children and youth safety planning tools.
8. Helped establish the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses – chairing the committee focused on establishing national policy/legislation for domestic violence.
9. One of the lead conveners for the Provincial Roundtable on Community Social Services – we established a communications plans for the sector, did focus groups to understand how the general public understood our work and are working on social policy frameworks for the Province of BC.
10. Actively supported the work of BC FIPA and BC Civil Liberties Association in their efforts to ensure that the Integrated Case Management system being constructed by government does not increase the risk for women fleeing violence.
11. Released a joint report with BC Non Profit Housing Association called *Surviving Not Thriving: The Systemic Barriers to Housing for Women Leaving Violent Relationships*.
12. Worked with Ministry of Children and Family Development to update the Best Practice Approaches: Child Protection and Violence Against Women. Working with MCFD to develop online training for these practices
13. Developed Safety Planning Tools for working with children and youth.

While the work listed is quite diverse, I believe that all of the work we are engaged in at BCSTH is geared towards addressing systemic barriers that women fleeing violence face in many aspects of their lives. We will continue to improve our communication with our membership and ensure that issues affecting you and the women you serve are carried forward in our meetings with Deputy Ministers and Ministers.

The year ahead still has many questions left unanswered. We are unclear whether or not there will be an RFP process for MPSSG contracts, how the BC Housing framework implementation will impact the day-to-day work of transition house, second stage and safe home programs and whether or not CWWA programs will have training monies allocated for their programs. The uncertainty has begun to feel familiar and that is reflective of the amount of change our sector has undergone. The fact that through all of this change women fleeing violence and children seeking support still have places to go that are safe and accessible is a testament to you all and the work you do in challenging times and circumstances. I look forward to times with more stability and accountability from government. Through our sustained advocacy at BCSTH and sector-wide I believe those times lay ahead.

Shabna Ali, Executive Director



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Lee

BCSTH Annual Conference Report

For two days in October 2010 BCSTH held its annual conference, Pathways to Service Excellence in Richmond, BC. The organizing team worked hard to ensure a cooperative, energetic, respectful and educational environment at the event. Participants experienced a jam-packed schedule of approximately 15 hours of professional development time, plus about 3-4 hours of unplanned networking opportunities.

Some highlights of the conference included a moving keynote presentation by Vikki Reynolds and informative workshops by Sandra Wieland, Rhiannon Wong and many more. There were more than 15 workshops to choose from, covering a vast range of topics: Trauma and Attachment, the Impact of Violence on a Child's Brain, Outcome Measures Management, Online Youth Culture, Including Trans Individuals in Transition House programs, to name but a few!

For BCSTH members, board and staff the conference was a great opportunity to share experiences, success stories, challenges and ideas. We were pleased to host more than 170 people from many areas of the province, with some of our members travelling from as far away as Prince Rupert, Masset, Williams Lake, Kitimat, Dawson Creek and Vanderhoof! It is great to know that all of the information gathered at conference made its way back to so many communities.

Conference attendees indicated through feedback that conference content reflected current issues in our sector. We will continue to poll our members to ensure that we know what topics we should offer at future conferences and training events.

We sincerely hope that the 2011 conference, happening again in October, will be equally successful. We hope to see you there!

Women's Services

Our priorities for Women's Services this year were participating in the BC Housing (BCH) Framework development, the Reducing Barriers project and finding financial support to create accessible training for our members. BC Housing Framework consultations put us in touch with many of our members and with the issues and trends that affect women, children, and your work with them. The meetings highlighted the diversity among our membership in terms of our geography, services and populations; but despite this diversity we also saw that we all work around a common thread - insistence that services retain feminist/women-centred values and practices. At the core of our work is advocacy to challenge and change systems which continue to contribute to violence against women. Without systemic advocacy, the larger pattern of women's oppression is concealed by strategies and policies which privatize violence against women and position individual women as the problem to be solved rather than identifying male violence as the real issue to work on.

Your formal and informal feedback told us you want BCSTH training re-established and would like to have more opportunities to connect with other anti-violence advocates across the province. To address your concerns, we sought funding to offer accessible and affordable training and ways for you to connect with others doing your work in BC. In 2010-2011 we secured funding from the Vancouver Foundation for a virtual "Knowledge Commons" where we will offer facilitated online training as well as "space" for you to share your knowledge, information and resources. We hope this virtual space will help to reduce isolation and restore a common sense of purpose.

Funding for BCSTH training in 2010 was redirected to cover production costs for the MPSSG/BCH Domestic Violence Safety Planning E-training, and BCSTH received some funding to consult on content. This Safety Planning training is intended to meet a recommendation and to fulfill the province of BC's Domestic Violence Strategic plan and is designed for Police- and Community-based Victims' Assistance, Outreach, Stopping the Violence and Children Who Witness Abuse Programs.

Most importantly, our contact with you over the past year has kept us grounded in the day-to-day realities of your work and informed about the systemic barriers facing women and children fleeing violence. We look forward to another very busy year supporting you in our collective struggle to end violence against women.

Reducing Barriers to Support for Women Who Experience Violence

In 2010, BCSTH continued our 2.5 year project to reduce barriers to support for women fleeing violence with varying levels of mental wellness and substance use, funded by Status of Women Canada. Drawing on consultations with women and Transition Housing program staff across the province, as well as international research and best practices, BCSTH developed a draft Promising Practices toolkit and training. In December, 23 women from 6 Transition House, Second Stage and Safe Home programs across BC attended four days of training on the Promising Practices. The sites had six months to try on changes in their programs and provide feedback to improve the toolkit and training. After collecting feedback from pilot sites, our Working Group members and women with varying levels of mental wellness and substance use, the final version of the toolkit and training will be ready in fall 2011.

BCSTH sends our sincere thanks out to Status of Women Canada and all of the people who were involved in the project in 2010 – whether through facilitating or participating in one-time surveys or focus groups or making a longer-term commitment on our Working Group and Implementation Committee. We are especially grateful to staff in the six pilot site programs that took on testing out our Promising Practices in their communities throughout BC.

Thank you to:

- Campbell River and North Island Transition Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association for the Kootenays
- Fireweed Collective Society
- Golden Women's Resource Society
- Ishtar Transition Housing Society
- Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Lee

24 Hour Census

In November 2010, 108 Children Who Witness Abuse, Transition House, Second Stage and Safe Home programs participated in BCSTH's 2nd Annual 24 Hour Count of Violence Against Women Services in BC. In just one day, these programs served 1081 women, youth and children!

The staff at BCSTH are working on the report for the 2010 24 Hour Census and hope that members will use the information for advocacy locally and provincially. We are also building capacity to streamline next years' census data analysis and get the information we collect back to you sooner. We are grateful to our members who participated in the 2010 Census and thank you for your patience as we work to make the census and report process better each year.

The 3rd annual 24 Hour Census will take place in November 2011. Watch your inbox and the BCSTH website www.bcsth.ca for more details!

Children & Youth's Services

The past year was a busy one for BCSTH's Children and Youth Services as we took on a variety of projects. In partnership with EVA BC, BCSTH developed resources on "Safety Planning for Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence" for the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. In just a few short months, and with guidance from our volunteer advisory committee, BCSTH was able to pilot a Safety Planning Toolkit, produce a short video series and coordinate the development of online training curriculum which will be launched in the fall of 2011 and available through MPSSG.

BCSTH continued our partnership with the Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Coastal Heath and the School Age Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Program to continue hosting two Aboriginal Capacity Cafes which give young Aboriginal people the chance to have their voices heard. We are in the early stages of developing a resource with our partners that will help other communities start similar initiatives.

To improve communication between BCSTH and our members who support children and youth we have started a listserv, Google site and monthly newsletter specifically for CWWA programs. Over the year, BCSTH also hosted 3 rounds of conference calls for CWWA programs across the province as well as host our first in person meeting for counsellors at our annual conference. CWWA Training was not available in 2010-2011 due to lack of funding. We continue to advocate for CWWA training funds to be restored.

Over the past year technology training to enhance the safety of women, children and youth has become increasingly relevant to our membership. BCSTH is continuing to build our partnership with the National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project to keep up-to-date on these emerging issues.

We are happy to announce that BCSTH was able to secure funding from the CKNW Orphan's Fund to honour Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Programs who facilitated the Violence Is Preventable (VIP) Project in their communities. In just 8 months, 24 CWWA programs reached 9,820 children, youth and educators through the VIP Project.

If you'd like more information please contact Rhiannon Wong, Children and Youth Services Coordinator. We look forward to another busy but rewarding year and to connecting with you in the year ahead!



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Lee

Library Report

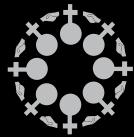
The BCSTH Library has hundreds of books, reports, videos, DVDs, audiocassettes, psycho-educational games, training manuals, BCSTH publications, web link and other resources related to violence against women and their children. Our BCSTH Library officially got up and running in 2010, offering full services to members, including:

- A searchable database of resources on violence against women and children
- Web links
- Loans of print and audio-visual materials
- Ask-a-Librarian service
- A monthly Library eUpdate

The library is staffed for 7 hours a week and in the past year we provided members with:

- 252 new resources
- 785 total resources in the catalogue
- 396 items borrowed

For more information about the library or to search our online database of resources (which is updated each week) see the BCSTH website www.bcsth.ca



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