



BC Society of
Transition Houses

Annual Report 11/12



Thank You.

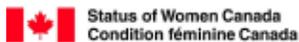
BCSTH gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.



BC Housing

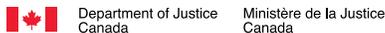


BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General



Status of Women Canada
Condition féminine Canada

vancouver
foundation



Department of Justice Canada
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Vancouver Coastal Health
Promoting wellness. Ensuring care



CKNW
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Canada Post Foundation
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Report to the Membership on behalf of the Board of Directors

BC Society of Transition Houses is a centre of excellence enhancing the continuum of services and strategies necessary to end violence against women, youth, and children. For the Board of Directors, this means we examine the fiduciary and financial practices of our agency and develop strategies to ensure that BCSTH reflects the needs of the whole community. This also means we envision ways to meet our goals and that we continually ask ourselves “is this the best we can do?” We believe this has been accomplished in a number of exceptional ways this past year.

First, our continuum of services and strategies has been enhanced in a number of substantial ways. For example, recognizing the value of technology as a tool, we implemented an online community to increase accessibility to training, where previously geography, travel, or a lack of funding were barriers. To date, nearly 300 participants have accessed Foundations in Violence Against Women, our first online training.

Additionally, in terms of examining the service continuum offered across the province, two other significant projects highlight both what we are doing well and what we could improve upon in order to better meet the needs of women and children. With the completion of the Reducing Barriers Pilot Project, we took up the challenge to ensure this toolkit was accessible to our members. The project continues this year with in-person agency training, which has increased the opportunity for training. Following this, Reducing Barriers II is now available online.

Many other projects and endeavors this year also reflect our mission. For example, BCSTH has been involved at the national level to develop effective legislation that will make a difference to ending violence against women. We have also worked on a number of best practice projects including Building Bridges, Child and Youth Safety Planning, the Violence Is Preventable project (VIP), as well as the development and delivery of curriculum on improving women’s safety in co-ed shelters.

At a board level, we have worked to be a centre of excellence with our continued commitment to travelling to the regions once a year to better understand our members’ issues and concerns as well as successes within our vast province. Last year we travelled to Kelowna; this year we were able to gather in Prince George. Most importantly, we engaged in rich dialogues around the work that we do, and how best to do macro-related advocacy in order to both eliminate violence against women and children and support our member organizations. Also, we are streamlining our board application process in order to ensure that our process is not a barrier to diversity.

In our current climate, and inclusive of this past year, violence against women and children continues to remain acceptable. Nonetheless, as I reflect upon all of our accomplishments, I am hopeful. I am proud of the work BCSTH and all its valuable member organizations continually do to improve upon how we provide services to women and children, while ensuring that the issue of ending violence against women and children is highlighted at local, provincial, and national levels.

Amanda Alexander, *Chair of the Board*



Executive Director's Report

It seems as though when I have talked to you this past year everyone is in the same place, getting busier and busier with less time and the expectation to do more. The same is true for us. As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that BCSTH continues to be a strong voice for women experiencing violence and our member agencies, particularly in our work on three key issues. First, the removal of the immediate requirement for outcome measures with BC Housing contracts. Second, the continued push for a provincial strategy and national legislation on violence against women. Third, the bringing forward of women's voices with the issues of violence, mental health, and substance use in transition houses through our Reducing Barriers Project, which wrapped up last fall. Throughout the project, we heard from hundreds of women across the province and, in response, developed practices and piloted these in six agencies across BC - with some agencies making significant changes to more effectively serve these women.

Additionally, over the past fiscal year we have worked tirelessly with BC Housing on the framework, monitoring, and contracts for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. We are still working on how to determine outcomes that focus on programs and supports for women and their children, rather than her ability to move forward. We have also consulted with other groups through connections we made during the 2nd International Conference on Women's Shelters in Washington, DC, as many of these groups also continue to struggle with similar issues of monitoring, outcomes, and funding formulas.

In 2011 the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses began the work to develop national legislation on Violence Against Women in Canada. BCSTH has been pushing for this both provincially and nationally for over four years and are now leading this committee. Although this work is barely off the ground, and will take years to complete, with ample consultation, we are ready to forge ahead. We believe that, moving forward, legislation is what will make the most impact on women's lives. Likewise, in March 2012, a new Office of Domestic Violence opened its doors in BC. We have been working hard to ensure that the Office focuses on the development of a provincial strategy on violence against women that goes beyond looking at the justice system to examine all systems that impact a woman's life.

We would also like to acknowledge the Board of Directors for taking on some very lofty goals and directions this past year. I would like to personally acknowledge the staff of BCSTH, while the team is small, their hearts are huge and they have forged ahead with grace and the desire to see change materialize. BCSTH, through the support of you, our members, will continue to be a strong voice for women experiencing violence and the services you provide. We believe that together, united, we can continue to make the changes we need to end violence against women.

Shabna Ali, *Executive Director*

Women's Services

Throughout the year our priority has been to re-establish BCSTH training, ensuring that it was both relevant and accessible to our membership. Thanks to support from the Vancouver Foundation and the Health Sciences Association, we developed the BCSTH Community Centre, which provides an online space for both facilitated and self-directed training. Our first online course, Foundations in Violence Against Women, provides an introduction to the principles of anti-violence work from a feminist, intersectional framework. Your feedback has been invaluable and recommendations will be incorporated this fall.

Recognizing that online training is no substitution for in-person facilitation where our members come together to share their expertise and learn from one another, we also facilitated Reducing Barriers training for our member agencies in Courtenay, Cranbrook, Kamloops, Mission, Smithers, and Vanderhoof. For BCSTH staff, facilitating training in your communities was a profoundly enriching experience. Feedback from these trainings consistently spoke to the need for more time; two days was not enough. So, next year, Reducing Barriers Agency Training will be scheduled over three days, followed by a four-week Reducing Barriers Part II online training. Our staff also thank all of the women who participated for their training presence, and for bringing open minds and hearts during our time together. Additionally, although we have completed the Reducing Barriers project and toolkit, the work we do to ensure that funders understand and address the inadequacy of resources, and to improve access to all services for all women who have experienced violence, will continue through trainings.

We also continued consultations with BC Housing and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (now Ministry of Justice) for the Safety Planning e-training, and with BC Housing on the Framework, new transition housing contracts, and on the piloting of client surveys. Yet, the highlight of our year is, without doubt, our interactions with all of you whether through trainings, meetings, or phone and email contact. Like you, there is always more to do than resources allow. We are grateful for all that we learn from you about your day-to-day work of walking alongside women and their children who have experienced violence. The constantly-shifting provincial political landscape and the gaps between policies and practices keep us very busy at BCSTH. We rely on you to share your concerns and struggles with us so that we can ensure we are prioritizing what is most urgent for women and their children.

Throughout the coming year, we look forward to our contact with all of you in our collective efforts to support women and their children who have experienced violence and, ultimately to end violence against women by advocating change in the conditions and structures that provide for it. We will also continue to challenge the subtle, but nevertheless cemented notion, that women who experience violence are the problem to be solved rather than men's use and the public's acceptance of violence against women.

Blueprint Project

In 2011 BCSTH received funding from Status of Women Canada for a two year Blueprint Project. Without the replication of existing services, our goal was to develop a framework for post-transition housing services that supports the needs of women leaving transition housing programs. With input from an advisory committee, which included members from the First Nations Health Council, funders, non-profit agencies, our member organizations, as well as women with lived experience, a women-centered model of service delivery was developed.

The model, which builds from a flexible framework that can be adapted to the diverse needs of each community, has two areas of focus. The first area focuses on direct, frontline support and advocacy for women moving on from transition housing programs. The second focus involves working with community partners, agencies, and individuals in local communities, regionally and provincially, to reduce barriers and increase women's access to housing and support services.

Two post-transition housing services workers have been hired and the six-month piloting phase in Creston and Penticton will complete in November 2012. We look forward to receiving the external evaluator's report in March 2013.



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Lee

Children & Youth's Services

Children and Youth Services carried out a variety of activities this year to support Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) programs and frontline workers supporting children and youth exposed to violence. We continued our work with our partners, producing two documents that we hope those supporting children and youth will find useful. We are also grateful for two grants for The Violence Is Preventable (VIP) Project, which will support students across the province for another school year. Through the CKNW Orphan's Fund, VIP received funding for school year-end honoraria for CWWA counsellor presentations and, with our advocacy, the Ministry of Justice committed to fund VIP for the 2012-2013 school year.

Other significant activities include the distribution of our CWWA monthly E-Newsletter, the hosting of an in-person meeting at the Annual Training Forum, as well as three conference calls for CWWA workers to network and share ideas, resources, trends, and emerging issues. Program promotion was also strong this year, on radio (in Quesnel and the CKNW Orphan's Fund radio-a-thon), on an international panel in Washington, DC (CWWA programs and Technology Safety), and at the 2nd World Conference of Women's Shelters (CWWA programs and the Aboriginal Capacity Café).

We also facilitated a number of community and agency-based trainings, including CWWA training in Quesnel for Region 7 programs, and training to support children and youth exposed to violence in the home for staff of one Project Haven program in Chilliwack. With support from the Safety Planning Advisory committee, we supported the development of the Safety Planning for Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence Online training, including the production of five short video clips. As well, we facilitated two Technology Trainings to Enhance the Safety of Women, Youth and Children in Vancouver and Salt Spring Island.

This past year was also a strong year for resource development, particularly with three projects. With support from an advisory committee, we developed the Safety Planning for Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence Toolkit, now available on the Ministry of Justice website. In partnership with Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Vancouver Board of Education and the School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Program, we developed a knowledge transfer document that supports urban Aboriginal youth through the Aboriginal Capacity Cafe, which is on the BCSTH website. We also developed an informational teen dating violence postcard "Love Doesn't Hurt" for Youth Week 2011.

In the upcoming 2012-2013 we aim to continue incorporating technology safety into our resources and build upon the momentum of our Love Doesn't Hurt Campaign. We will change up quarterly conference calls with CWWA Lunch and Learn webinars and will continue to strive to produce useful resources for CWWA programs, including two new videos and a supporting Children and Youth philosophies poster. We look forward to new accomplishments in the year ahead!

BCSTH Annual Conference Report

BCSTH's Annual Training Forum took place in Richmond, BC on October 19 to 21, 2011. A record 200+ attendees joined us for two days of learning and networking.

The organizing team worked hard to ensure a cooperative, energetic, respectful and educational environment at the event. Pathways to Service Excellence was a two-day training event that packed a substantial amount of learning into approximately 13 hours of professional development time and over 5 hours of unplanned networking opportunities. We were proud to provide almost 30 workshops and more than 13 hours of dedicated learning time. A night out for dinner and an evening shopping trip to IKEA rounded out our networking opportunities.

In particular, a handful of workshops and speakers resonated with the attendees, including Vikki Reynolds, Sandra Wieland, Cynthia Fraser, Nancy Poole, Tracy Myers and Christine Lummis. Attendees responded most to workshops that provided take-aways and practical recommendations for workplace applications.

We continue to use the membership survey to determine impactful workshops to deliver at each Training Forum. As we head into the end of summer, we are looking at another roster of inspirational and informative speakers and topics for the October 2012 event.



Photo Courtesy of Hannah Lee

24 Hour Census

This past November 22 - 23, 2011 BCSTH members (124 Safe Home, Transition House, Second Stage, and Children Who Witness Abuse programs) participated in the 3rd Annual 24 Hour Census of Violence Against Women services. During this 24 hour-period these programs helped 2876 people, including an astounding 1110 in-person and 1461 on the phone. Another 305 people were educated about violence against women and the effects of witnessing violence on children and youth.

The 24 Hour Census helps BCSTH to gather information and educate others about the essential work of our members. With the information we collect and share, we increase awareness about the successes and challenges of programs that support women and children who have experienced violence. For example, although thousands of women and their children were helped on just one day, another 641 women, youth and children were unable to access help when they needed it, mostly because of limited resources.

We extend much appreciation to the programs that responded, as more BCSTH members participated than ever before; we hope that even more programs will participate in the 4th Annual 24 Hour Census of Violence Against Women Services this November 2012. For the full report or for more information about the 24 Hour Census see the BCSTH website <http://www.bcsth.ca/content/24-hour-census>.



Library Report

The BCSTH Library has developed an online database with over 1,000 web links, books, reports, DVDs, and other resources that are carefully selected to support BCSTH staff and members in their work with women and children. By starting with the BCSTH Library database, members can quickly identify the best information to assist them in their work.

In 2011-2012, we added over 300 new items to the database (the library catalogue). Our members use the catalogue to link to key web resources in their field, as well as to borrow over 350 print and audio-visual resources each year. The library is staffed for 7 hours per week.

In addition, members received:

- Monthly Library eUpdate
- New online tutorials on how to use the library
- New borrowers section on the BCSTH website
- Book giveaway at BCSTH conference (a way to reuse older materials)
- Research assistance

For more information about the library or to search our online database of resources, see the BCSTH website <http://bcsth.ca/content/library-catalogue>



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