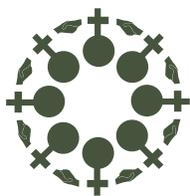




BC Society of Transition Houses
Annual Report 2009/2010

Report to the Membership from Board of Directors



Thank You.

BCSTH gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.



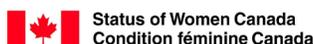
BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Public Safety
and Solicitor General

Ministry of Housing
and Social Development

Canada

The Government of Canada's
National Crime
Prevention Strategy



Status of Women Canada
Condition féminine Canada



BC Housing



Across the Sector, and no different with BCSTH, this year has included a huge variety of uncertainty, cautiousness, and apprehension. All our agencies have been concerned about the fragmentation of our service continuum, will our programs be recognized and valued by a new funding body, and how will we continue to do this valuable work with potentially less dollars, less resources to refer to, and more women and children to serve. Nonetheless, given these concerns, we continue, as women and organizations, to be resilient and to make the most of the challenges that we are presented with, as we continue to work towards the elimination of violence against women, children and youth.

Through this challenging time, the BCSTH has continued to move forward as a centre of excellence. We have secured multi year funding on developing best practices for reducing barriers for women accessing transition houses with substance use and mental wellness issues. We have worked collaboratively with the provincial umbrella groups to lobby government regarding issues that are relevant to the social service sector. We succeeded in working collaboratively with our sisters at EVA to have the 2% funding cuts to Children Who Witness Abuse and Stopping The Violence contracts re-instated. We have worked in coordination with other provincial umbrella organizations in order to form a newly funded national umbrella of Canadian network of women's shelters and transition houses. We have worked collaboratively with many of our members to provide a feminist, anti oppressive perspective to the BC Housing Transition House Framework.

On a board level, we have formalized our board evaluation process, we have participated in media training, and we are working on a new framework for board governance policies. We have wished our Yukon members good luck as they take on their own journey in establishing a territorial agency that will provide them greater connection to issues relevant to practice in the territories.

We know that this time of uncertainty is not over. Yet, we continue to be passionate in advocating for women, children and youth to live violence free. This is the vision that unites us all. We may have unique ways of working towards this goal; nonetheless, it is a vision that collectively unites us as we continue to persevere until it is realized. So, thank you to all the amazing women around this province that work everyday tireless, in so many ways, regardless of the barriers, to achieve this vision.

Amanda Alexander, *Chair of the Board*



Photo Courtesy of Jody Salerno

Executive Director's Report

This year has seen much change in our sector, including a split between programs with some moving to BC Housing and others to the Ministry for Public Safety and Solicitor General. In addition, the release of some key reports is guiding government on issues of violence against women. The Honouring Christian Lee Report in particular has had a significant influence on what our work looks like and will look like in the future.

In spring 2010 BCSTH changed our name as our Yukon friends form their own coalition. We have begun implementing our Reducing Barriers project, an initiative funded by Status of Women Canada, to better serve women who have the overlapping issues of substance use, mental health and violence in their lives. We released our Children Who Witness Abuse Best Practice Guide in spring 2009 and wrapped up a three year project on aboriginal youth with CAMH Centre for Prevention Science and the University of Western Ontario. A one day symposium was held in fall 2009 to launch the resulting Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A toolkit for service providers. Our Photovoice project, completed in partnership with BC Non Profit Housing Association, was hugely successful and provided insight into the barriers for women and their children fleeing violence after they leave Transition Housing programs, including the lack of housing options in many BC communities.

The past year has been complex with much of our common landscape shifting, leaving us all struggling to keep up with the changes. The downturn of the economy had a direct impact on programs, as many of you saw more women requiring service. It has also meant that how we raise funds and do business as a sector has had to change. We look forward to working together to ensure that women across the province get the support and assistance they seek.

The coming year promises to provide continuing challenges for you in your work. We at BCSTH are committed to supporting you by ensuring that government is informed about the issues affecting you, the women, youth and children you serve. We will also continue to critically analyze and keep you informed about policies which impact women, youth and children across the province.

Shabna Ali, *Executive Director*

Women's Services

During this past year we moved forward with many new projects and programs. With a member advisory committee, BCSTH developed a framework document for transition house programs (transition houses, second stage, third stage and safe homes). The document describes the foundations and principles of our work and is set for release in its final form at the end of September, 2010.

We were fortunate to have training facilitators able to update the modules as they delivered them. Work to ensure the most up to date training material and best approaches continues. In 2009/2010 the transition house training program incorporated all of the new material with focus on service inclusion, and training was well received by participants.

BCSTH continued work with MCFD on updating its policy regarding Violence Against Women in Relationship and Child Protection. The goal is to establish updated province wide child protection principles and practices that are respectful, supportive and woman/mother centered. We have also had the opportunity to work with other provincial and international organizations and to learn about emerging approaches and promising practices elsewhere and to think about how they relate to our work here in BC.

Last, and most importantly, we provided direct support to our membership; those of you who called with questions about practices, policies, struggles, board issues, training interests, and anything else that might arise. We enjoy your calls and email; our ongoing contact gives us a strong sense of provincial trends, keeps us up to date on the issues you face locally in your work with women, children and youth and helps to keep us connected in our collective work to end violence against women.

Children & Youth's Services

2009-2010 has been another year of transformation for Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) Programs. With the launch of the "Best Practices for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs" and the move to the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, there will continue to be changes to CWWA Programming throughout 2010-2011.

As a result of the "Honouring Christian Lee Report" by the Representative for Children and Youth, there has been increasing attention on children and youth exposed to violence against women (VAW). Based on recommendations in this report, funders have begun to push for an increase in the use of safety planning and risk assessment tools. Both our Children & Youth and Women's Services have been involved in consultations with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to incorporate VAW perspectives into their current practices to develop a curriculum update.

Though we continue to see funding concentrated on intervention over prevention, the CKNW's Orphan's fund acknowledged the need for prevention and provided small grants to 33 CWWA programs who presented and facilitated Violence is Preventable (VIP) groups in schools in their communities. While there is no funding for the VIP Project for 2010-2011, BCSTH is committed to working to secure funding for prevention activities.

The upcoming year will continue to involve a number of consultations between funders and CWWA programs. We encourage all programs to advocate around the concerns that you have voiced to BCSTH over the past year. We are committed to assisting all programs through the consultation process and to meeting the needs of our CWWA members.



Reducing Barriers to Support for Women Who Experience Violence

Our Reducing Barriers Working Group, made up of women who have experienced violence and service providers from the violence against women, mental wellness and substance use sectors met in January 2010 to kickoff the project. Funded by Status of Women Canada, this project will help to reduce barriers to support for women fleeing violence who have varying levels of mental wellness and substance use. The project runs until August 2011 and the end product will be a Promising Practices Toolkit for Transition Housing programs. For more information about the project contact Rebecca, Project Coordinator, rebecca@bcsth.ca.

24 Hour Census

We launched our first 24 hour census in November of 2009. The census was built to help us and our funders understand the scope of women's need in a 24 hour period of time. Many times we hear that women are going from transition house to transition house, we wanted to capture numbers about use of services that would work towards eliminating these built in biases. The data collected was astounding and quite large. It has taken us a long time to sort through the data and write the report. The report will be release in September 2010. We will be doing another 24 hour census November 24, 2010. The census will be different as we have modified our questions to keep the data collection simpler, which will result in a shorter turn around on the report (we hope!).

BCSTH Annual Conference Report

The 2009 Annual Conference for the BCSTH brought together approximately 150 members of the violence against women sector in beautiful Richmond, BC. Entitled Pathways to Service Excellence, the conference focused on how to make our services more accessible to an increased range of women and their children.

Workshops on inclusive practices focused on a variety of communities who often experience barriers to service, including: LGBT2SQQI communities, women, youth and children who are immigrants or who have no status in Canada, women who use substances, women impacted by mental health, women and children who are aboriginal, non-abusive custodial males and women who have disabilities. Engaging conversations offered helpful solutions and fresh approaches to the challenges we face in our every day work. Our preconference day, entitled Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A Vancouver Symposium for Service Providers, was attended by an extraordinary number of people who filled the ballroom with an infectious, positive energy. As we prepare for the 2010 Conference, we strive to provide BCSTH members with more opportunities to share ideas about how we can continue to diversify our skills and experiences in order to help all women fleeing violence.

Training

More than 240 anti-violence workers participated in our training this year. Five four-day modules of Transition House and three four-day Children Who Witness Abuse training modules were offered in 2009-2010. There were more than 20 guests speakers invited to present on various topics, enhancing the capacity of anti-violence workers.

Events BCSTH Attended in 2009/2010

- Preventing Violence Against Women Panel, We Can
- International Day Against Homophobia Breakfast, QMUNITY
- David Berman Concurrent Disorders Memorial Conference
- Building Bridges Training, Woman Abuse Response Program
- Creating a Culture of Prevention, City of Vancouver Four Pillars Drug Strategy
- Send-off Breakfast for Walk 4 Justice, Walk 4 Justice
- Annual Housing for Women March, Power of Women Group
- MAP Van Vigil, Vancouver, WISH Society
- BC Teacher's Federation Conference – Presenter
- Safety Net Training through the National Network to End Domestic Violence
- Missing & Murdered Women Vigil, Walk 4 Justice
- BC School Counsellors Conference – Presenter
- Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth Symposium
- Community Social Service Employer's Association Conference
- Aboriginal Capacity Cafe at Templeton High School
- Violence Against Women Symposium, Robson Square
- School-Aged Childcare: Needs and Alternatives, YMCA and United Way
- 16 Days of Activism Candle Light Vigil, We Can
- Remembering Our Sisters Everywhere, National Day of Remembrance
- Jackson Katz Public Lecture, UBC
- Downtown Eastside Women's Memorial March
- Aboriginal Cultural Safety & Inclusion Workshop, Vancouver Coastal Health
- Working with Trans People in Housing Settings, SHARP Access Project, PRISM
- Moving Forward to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women Forum, Aboriginal Wellness Program
- Gendering the National Framework Webinar, BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health



Photo Courtesy of Jody Salerno

The Road Ahead

The 2010-2011 year will look very different for all of us. As government has put training funds toward the development of an online “Domestic Violence Safety Planning” training, we will not be able to provide our usual module training. Although BCSTH is one of the consultants on this project, we are very clear that this training will not be an adequate replacement for our module training.

We have heard all of your requests to make training more affordable and are examining ways of moving our training (both Transition Housing and CWWA) into online formats. We will be aiming to deliver online training coupled with shorter in person training modules delivered in each region. This shift in our trainings will mean that, in the future, weekend, overnight and relief staff will be able to be fully trained in cost-effective ways. We also know that CWWA staff, many of whom have been in their positions for years, are seeking new trainings and this will free up resources for us to develop new trainings focusing on current issues.

The upcoming year will also see the development of a program framework for Transition House, Second Stage and Safe Home programs, along with new contracts and contract language. This year will bring about a lot of change for the sector, all in an effort to deliver more effective, women-centered services.

You can help direct that change. You have an important opportunity to comment on the proposed Family Relations Act that will impact women and their children fleeing violence and also to speak about the impact the cuts to legal aid has had on women and children across BC. We encourage you all to provide input on these two very important pieces of work that are happening.

Your contact with us not only keeps us informed about and in touch with the issues you face in your communities, but helps us to identify patterns and trends for programs and the women, youth and children you serve across the province. We appreciate hearing about your thoughts, concerns and experiences and look forward to our continued contact throughout the coming year.



BC Society of Transition Houses

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