



## Joint Letter from the Board of Directors & Executive Director

This past year has been filled with much loss. Tragically we have had a significantly high number of deaths of women and their children at the hands of their abuser. It continues to be a challenge when support costs continue to rise and government has clearly indicated that there is no new money. BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) continues to advocate for more dollars, better systems to address gaps, legal aid and increases to income assistance levels. Progress has been made in some areas, but we still have much work ahead. We want to send out a huge THANK YOU to all of you who continue to provide safety to women and their children experiencing violence in these challenging times.

This past year BCSTH has been engaged in several projects to see new practices be developed to better serve particular populations. We began the year with two new projects that focus on specific vulnerable populations. Our Aboriginal Women's Consultation Project aims to gather Aboriginal women's voices about how transition house services can better meet their needs. Building Supports project aims to bring the voices of immigrant and refugee women's needs to the forefront and to help us better understand how transition houses and long-term housing can better meet women and children needs. BCSTH added some additional online training and completed a series of free legal webinars all available on our online training platform. We were invited to consult in Ottawa on "Honour-based killings and Forced Marriage" issues. BCSTH has been actively involved in the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses National Action Plan committee. We worked tirelessly, to ensure that the changes to the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CFCSA) would not be interpreted as requiring Transition Houses to report when a woman left a house to return to her abuser. We developed and delivered training with Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) on the changes to the legislation. While the training was filled with challenges, BCSTH was able to get staff out to various regions and we were able to foster relationships that we continue to leverage to assist all of you in supporting women and children. BCSTH has been critical of and calling for a recall of the Missing Person Act legislation that was legislated in early 2014. We continue to be critical of government's response to the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Report.

At BCSTH we are also saying good-bye to Shabna Ali, our Executive Director for over six years. Shabna has been a strong advocate for women and children in this province and has worked tirelessly to support and enhance programs that our members provide. We wish her the best as she undertakes the next step in her journey. We also would like to welcome Catherine Talbot, our new Executive Director. Catherine's history of advocacy will help move our sector forward and ensure that the issues women, children and our members face are powerfully represented to government.

We know that this year has been challenging and given government direction, the year ahead will prove to be challenging also. We ask for your continued support, for your voices to be loud, while presenting solutions to the challenges our sector faces. We ask that you build support in your communities, add community voices to your own so that the Provincial government understands the breadth and depth of your services and the value of your organization in your community.



## Children & Youth Services

### CWWA (Children Who Witness Abuse) Programs

With funding from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), BCSTH supported 95 communities across BC to deliver CWWA programming.

- Facilitated networking, referrals, information-sharing, program coordination, professional development, and capacity building.
- Surveyed CWWA Counsellors for their input on (1) networking, education, and sharing needs for 2013-14; (2) culturally-competent services for Aboriginal families; and (3) CWWA program waitlists.
- Offered Lunch & Learn Webinar Series for CWWA Counsellors.
- Developed and distributed two new prevention and awareness postcards for youth titled "Love is Respect" and "Love is Strength".
- Hosted an in-person meeting for CWWA Counsellors at the Annual Training Forum (ATF).
- Provided feedback on CWWA program concerns to First Call Coalition and Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV); child protection issues to MCFD and MOJ; domestic violence training to MCFD; Safe Relationships, Safe Children to PODV.
- Guided emerging issues and trends highlighted by frontline workers, advocated for resources to better support new Canadian families; funding to enable regional meetings for CWWA Counsellors; responses to concerns related to the Family Law Act, and the CFCSA.

### VIP (Violence is Preventable) Programs

With funding from the CKNW Orphan's Fund, supported 36 sites across the province to deliver VIP programming.

- 581 presentations delivered to VIP program participants in schools and communities throughout BC.
- Hosted a webinar and online self-paced training to CWWA Counsellors involved in the VIP program.
- Shared resources with CWWA programs working in schools.
- Provided feedback on prevention programming in schools to We Can End All Violence Against Women BC.

## Women's Services

With Funding from BC Housing, BCSTH supported 124 Transition House (Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses and Safe Home) programs across BC.

- Tracked and provided weekly updates to members on emerging violence-against-women issues, trainings, resources, and member announcements.
- Supported members on issues including crisis intervention, conflict resolution, intake, eligibility, understaffing, funding gaps, records management, subpoenas and accreditation.
- Created policy templates for transition houses on security, health safety, emergencies personnel conduct and recruitment, equality and diversity, client's rights and service eligibility.
- Hosted in-person meetings for Transition House, Second Stage House and Safe Home workers at the ATF.
- Analysed provincial initiatives and provided timely feedback from members and women fleeing violence about the BC Missing Person's Act, Family Law Act changes, and the CFCSA amendments, Service Card, Integrated Case Management System, Inn-keepers Act, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) protection order enforcement.
- Represented membership in policy meetings with MCFD, MOJ, BC Housing, PODV, Ending Violence BC, Community Coordination for Women's Safety and at the national level with the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses.
- Submitted report of recommendations to PODV.

### BC Society of Transition Houses

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## TRAINING

### Online Trainings (BCSTH Online Community)

Our online community had over 350 new enrollments in these online self-paced and facilitated courses:

- CWWA I: Introduction to Working with Children and Youth Exposed to Domestic Violence
- CWWA II: Supporting Children and Youth Exposed to Violence Against Women
- Foundations in Violence Against Women 2nd Edition
- Reducing Barriers II: Continuing to Reduce Barriers for Women with Varying Levels of Mental Wellness and Substance Use (two facilitated sessions)
- Reducing Stress and Burnout: A Free Webinar for Anti-Violence Workers
- TH101 & TH102: Introduction to Transition House Part 1 and Part 2 (two facilitated sessions)
- VIP: Violence is Preventable for Very Important People 2nd Edition

### In-Person Trainings

- **Annual Training Forum (ATF):** 240 participants attended three days of keynotes, networking sessions, and over 30 workshops with a Family Law theme.
- In six BC regions, transition houses participated in agency-based three-day trainings on Reducing Barriers for Women with Varying Levels of Mental Wellness and Substance Use.
- We hosted a provincial CWWA two-day in-person training.

## SAFETY NET CANADA

This national technology safety initiative of Cynthia Fraser, Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC) and BCSTH, researched and identified how technology can enhance safety for women, youth and others experiencing violence.

- Released findings from our two surveys of Canadian Violence Against Women programs on Technology Misuse and on Organizational Technology Practices.
- Released two Guides on Social Media and on Databases with Privacy, Security and Confidentiality Considerations for Canadian Violence Against Women programs.
- Presented five Technology Trainings to Enhance Women and Children's Safety in BC communities.
- Presented provincial training on Violence Against Women and Technology for the Manitoba justice sector, the Ontario Attorney General, and federal committees.
- Provided recommendations on women fleeing technology-enabled abuse to federal and provincial government agencies, Facebook and Google, as well as on CBC's The National.
- Supported members on issues including location tracking, impersonation, agency technology use, records, law, evidence, relocation privacy and technology safety planning.

## KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PROJECT

BCSTH and Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Services Agencies of BC (AMSSA) were hired to create a tool kit for the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV). The toolkit was aimed at the Settlement Sector and the Anti Violence Sector to provide more knowledge and skills to each sector on how to better support immigrant and refugee women and their children experiencing violence. Working with an advisory committee, our team developed a series of six webinars and a toolkit free for the sector to use. These tools are available on the PODV's website at [www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/podv/webinars.htm](http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/podv/webinars.htm).

## ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S CONSULTATION PROJECT

BCSTH has received funding from BC Housing to address transition house specific recommendations in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry. The project goal is, without replicating existing services, to develop a flexible model of service that supports women and their children accessing transition housing programs in or near First Nations/Aboriginal communities. There are two phases to this project. Last year we have achieved the following:

- Conducted focus groups with women with lived experience.
- Selected pilot sites.
- Convened an Advisory Committee.
- Began the development of practices.

## BUILDING SUPPORTS PROJECT

This three-year project is co-led by BCSTH, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, and the SFU FREDIA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children. The project seeks to understand the barriers to accessing short- and long-term housing for immigrant and refugee women leaving violent relationships, and to identify practices and policies that can facilitate the removal of barriers to safe, secure and affordable housing. The objective of Phase 1 was to understand the experiences of immigrant and refugee women attempting to secure safe, affordable and culturally appropriate housing after leaving violent situations.

- Two Advisory Committees have been established, one with service providers in the housing and anti-violence sectors and federal and provincial government representatives and the other with immigrant and refugee women with lived experiences of violence and housing issues.
- Online surveys were conducted with Transition House workers and service providers in Multi-Service Agencies.
- Interim Report of Summary of Survey Findings and Infographic have been released.

## LIBRARY SERVICES

The BCSTH Library has an online database of 1,472 resources selected to support BCSTH staff and members in their work with women, children and youth.

- 230 new items were added, 326 items were borrowed by members and the library welcomed 47 new borrowers this year.
- Resources added to the library collection this year included policy statements, research reports, and project reports as well as promising practices, curriculum, activity guides, toolkits, workbooks, and books and games to use with children and youth. A diverse range of topics were covered, including mental health, support groups, technology, gangs, LGBTQ, self harm, and Dialectical Behavior Therapy.
- In addition to access to the library catalogue and borrowing privileges, members received the following library services:
  - Library eUpdate via the BCSTH weekly Newsletter
  - BCSTH weekly library blog postings
  - Access to 138 member-written reviews of resources
  - Book display and giveaway at the ATF
  - Research assistance

## FUNDERS

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BC Housing



Canada



Status of Women Canada

Condition féminine Canada



Department of Justice Canada

Ministère de la Justice Canada