





MISSION STATEMENT

BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses will become a centre of excellence enhancing the continuum of services and strategies necessary to end violence against women, youth and children.

FUNDERS

BCYSTH gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.



Ministry of Community Services

Ministry of Housing
and Social Development



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Status of Women Canada
Condition féminine Canada

Report to the Membership

from the Board of Directors

As you all know, BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses (BCYSTH) has faced significant issues this past year, in particular the move of programs to BC Housing and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General; and the very real possibility that in these current economic times, BCYSTH's core funding specifically and funding for anti-violence services more broadly, may be impacted. For our sector changes in public policies, including Treasury policies such as, how much funding we will receive and mandate policies such as which Minister we will have are not new to us. We face this every time there is a change in government, or a change in government priorities.

What gets us through these challenging times? I believe it is our focus on the women and children we serve, on our member agencies and on our shared goal of working to end violence against women, youth and children. Profound sources of inspiration can keep staff, board, and members working toward this common goal; regardless of our external environment.

So, we will continue to encourage the Provincial Government to work toward this common goal and take a systems-wide view of violence against women (VAW). As well, we hope the newly formed Deputy Minister's Committee on VAW seeks the voice of the sector to inform their work.

Finally, this is important work that brings a deep sense of satisfaction. To all of you who do this work; you are the source of stability our clients need when stability is hard to find anywhere else in the system. I would like to say thank you to all our member agencies for working with us, sharing your ideas and thoughts and continuing your hard work in your communities. Whether we always agree or not is not the point; that we continue to work together, is.

I would also like to thank Shabna and the staff at BCYSTH. Regardless of what happens, they rise to the challenge every day and continue to bring a passion to this work that astounds me. The same is true of my colleagues on the board, busy with their own work in community, they continue to give of their time, expertise and passion to this agency and strive to move BCYSTH ever closer to our goal of being a Centre of Excellence. I am humbled to be among them.

This is my last year as a Board Member, and I say farewell with mixed feelings. I will miss all of you, and yet, I leave with a light enough heart, knowing that those that remain on the board will continue to do the very best they can do to move BCYSTH ever closer to its vision. You are in good hands moving into the future.

Anne Graboski, *Chair of the Board*



Photo Courtesy of Blackbird

Executive Director's Report

Dear Members,

This past year has been filled with many changes for BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses. We introduced a new mission statement, adopted new strategic directions and passed new bylaws. All of which have charted a new direction for us as an organization. This past year we set out to define a feminist framework that would articulate what we meant when we used the term "feminist framework". This process was undertaken by staff as we researched articles, and had many discussions about what we envisioned BCYSTH's framework to be. Without having answers we engaged the board in a similar process. The staff and board created a draft feminist framework that reflects the values inherent in our work.

Without ranking, we identify power as including experiences with and ability to access systems, social or economic status, occupation, education, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, geographic location, citizenship/nationalities, refugee/immigrant status, experience of colonization, Aboriginal and health. Acknowledging that this is not exhaustive, we are committed to the elimination of all forms of oppression. This will further include an update of resources and reference materials that align with BCYSTH's framework of inclusion and accessibility.

We are now bringing this draft framework to you to review and process. This year's conference will allow members to contribute to the idea, to the language and reflect what you would like to see in the feminist framework of your provincial association. In addition to this foundational piece of work, we also worked hard to establish relationships with members, to provide opportunities for members to directly inform the work we are engaged in and to connect with each other.

Throughout this past year BCYSTH has worked to deal with the proposed move of programs from Ministry of Housing and Social Development. We know now that this move will be proceeding. BCYSTH has begun the process of building relationships with both BC Housing and Ministry of Public Safety Solicitor General. We will continue to work hard to ensure that the hard work being done on the ground to address the needs of women and children fleeing violence does not change.

We know that this year ahead is filled with uncertainty but we believe that through hard work, excellent communication skills and lots of integrity, we can build solid relationships that will, over time, see our sector flourish. We hope you will keep engaged with us as we grow, change and work to become increasingly more responsive to our membership's needs.

Shabna Ali, Executive Director

*“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”
-Alice Walker-*

Women’s Services

The Women’s Services Division at BCYSTH is young, growing and evolving into a rich and responsive tool for Members. The vision of this Division is to provide support and information to Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses and Safe Homes, including Older Women’s supports and Outreach programs.

Some of the ways we are doing this are to:

- Coordinate surveys and evaluation mechanisms.
- Develop, implement and evaluate a full spectrum of programs for the Women’s Services Division.
- Work with Members to develop Promising Practices Guides, how to manuals, and new trainings.
- Facilitate training for Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses and Safe Homes, including Older Women’s curriculum.
- Build a culture that strives for results, continuous improvement, adaptability to change and accountability.
- Provide leadership and promote issues related to Violence Against Women.
- Work to enhance the public image of BCYSTH with Members and other organizations concerned with Violence Against Women.
- Provide the public with information, education and referrals.
- Advocate on behalf of the Society and our Members to government and other public bodies regarding Violence Against Women.

What has been happening at BCYSTH Women’s Services Division?

A complete audit of BCYSTH’s Transition House Training Modules has been done and we are now in the process of developing a work plan for the re-write and up-date of our training. This will include a critical lens to language incorporating an Intersectional Feminist Framework when looking at systems of power.

We had our first Member Sectoral Conference Call in February and are in the process of scheduling these calls twice per year.

We have been participating in Cross Sectoral Domestic Violence Round Tables where the Settlement Sector and the Violence Against Women Sector came together to discuss and strategize on how the two sectors can work collaboratively, sharing our wisdom and expertise to ensure a high standard of service for all women, youth and children fleeing violence. The Cross Sectoral Domestic Violence Round Tables were led by Bally Bassi and took place in Kelowna and Nanaimo.

BCYSTH and BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPH) have been partnering since 2005 to develop a program of research designed to understand and address the long-term housing needs of women fleeing violence. The “Shedding Light” project was the second undertaken within this partnership, and is funded primarily by the Vancouver Foundation with secondary support from the BC Women’s Health Research Network and the BC Rural and Remote Health Research Network. The partnership involves conducting research specific to the issues faced by Immigrant and Refugee women, and by Aboriginal women.



Aboriginal Capacity Cafe

An Aboriginal Capacity Café is a unique opportunity for Aboriginal community members and caregivers to engage in a powerful holistic healing experience with Aboriginal youth using the oral tradition of an informal talking circle. The overall goal of this dialogue is to have young people feel listened to, respected, and valued in order that they view themselves as a needed resource within the community. By creating this youth-friendly environment, youth are willing to talk openly about their lives and the issues that they consider important. The community then is offered the chance to learn the realities of life as a youth in today's society. Aboriginal youth converse about their personal stories of substance use, violence, school, peer pressure and home life to name a few. The key tenet of the Aboriginal Capacity Cafe is that through the engagement of young people there is the potential to forge intergenerational connections by helping caregivers and the Aboriginal communities understand and appreciate life from the youth perspective (e.g., stressors and lived experiences). In turn, young people can hear the questions and concerns that caregivers and the community have in relation to being a youth in today's society.

BCYSTH has had an amazing opportunity to partner with the Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the School Aged Children and Youth Substance Use Prevention Initiative over the past year. To date the Aboriginal Capacity Cafe partners have hosted 3 cafes; 1 in downtown Vancouver and 2 in East Vancouver. Plans to host 1 will take place next fall. The Aboriginal Capacity Cafe partners also presented their new project at the London Ontario conference showcasing the Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth: A Toolkit for Service Providers in November 2008.

Funding provided by Health Canada's Population Health Fund (07-09) and BC Healthy Communities (09-10)

“I was really glad that I could talk about what happened in my past. It was very touching for me.”

“I think it was a really good way for parents to listen to what teens feel as opposed to when teens are trying to tell their parents themselves because that may sound like they're arguing.”

- Quotes from Youth

*“Courage is like a muscle.
We strengthen it with use.”* -Ruth Gordon-

Prevention Against Violence Against Women Week

April marks BC’s annual Prevention of Violence Against Women Week. In 2009, BCYSTH provided its members with a downloadable toolkit for anyone to promote PAVAWW in their community and enhance their activities by using the resources they wanted. This reduced BCYSTH’s environmental impact by cutting down on printing, shipping and overall paper waste. There were 2 posters to print off, one where you can add your own organizations name at the bottom, proclamation and workshop templates, statistics and History of PAVAWW, and much more that could magnify the impact of individual community campaigns!

Reducing Barriers to Support for Women Who Experience Violence

BCYSTH has received funding from Status of Women Canada to reduce barriers to support for women who experience violence and who have varying levels of mental health and substance use. We have hired a project coordinator (Rebecca Haskell) and will soon be establishing a Working Group made up of Front Line Workers and Management in the mental health, substance use and violence against women’s sectors to guide the project.

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Rebecca at rebecca@bcysth.ca

Taking it to the Streets

On June 13, 2009 BCYSTH took part in the 3rd Annual Women’s Housing March, organized by the Power of Women Group. The March, which began outside the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre and stopped along various points in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES), raised awareness about poverty among women. Marchers advocated for social housing, childcare and healthcare for everyone; an end to evictions and condo development in the DTES; prioritizing people over Olympic profits, and; an end to the criminalization of the poor.

Children Who Witness Abuse

To date BCYSTH’s Children Services supports 92 CWWA program in BC and 2 in the Yukon Territories. Over the past year, 2 conference calls for each region was held where CWWA counsellors had an opportunity to provide program input, share resources, raise questions, and discuss emerging issues and trends.

CWWA counsellors were also able to provide input via advisory committees for 2 valuable projects. The Best Practices for Children Who Witness Abuse Programs was authored and published over the past year. The Best Practices guide is a minimum set of standards for the basic level of service that CWWA programs should be administering as BCYSTH acknowledges that a program’s capacity varies throughout the province. In turn it is the agency’s responsibility to set their level of standards and policies around their CWWA practice. We would like to thank the expertise of our valuable advisors and author of this project.

BCYSTH also collaborated with Jeremy’s Memorial Foundation on their activity book; “There’s Only One Me! An Activity Book for School Aged Children.” BCYSTH and a small CWWA advisory committee provided guidance and feedback to the foundation as they work on their book in hopes to publish and distribute it to CWWA programs in the upcoming year.



Training

BCYSTH provides training to front line workers in the Transition House sector and in the CWWA program. The Transition House curriculum is comprised for five – four day modules and the CWWA curriculum is comprised of three- four day modules. In addition we provide training for Older Women and Crisis Intervention.

This past year we delivered ten training modules of our core training plus our annual training conference. We trained 248 people via our training modules and 175 via our annual training conference. All of this training assists members in ensuring that their staff are up to date on new practices, policies and how best to support women and children fleeing violence.

The Road Ahead

Over the next year we have planned the following initiatives:

- **Aboriginal Capacity Cafes** - There is funding in place for the next three capacity cafes. These cafes provide a space for Aboriginal youth to freely speak about life from their perspective, including violence, substance use, community and family.
- **Aboriginal Symposium** - September 30, 2009 BCYSTH along with our partners, CAMH Centre for Prevention Science and The University of Western Ontario we will be hosting a day to focus on Engaging and Empowering Aboriginal Youth.
- **Technology and Women's Safety** - We will be adding to trainings and newsletters tips on how to adapt technology to keep women safe.
- **16 days of Action** (November 25 – December 10) - A new campaign to engage your community in awareness about violence against women.
- **Older Women's Project** - Presenting at conferences to move the agenda of the Silent and Invisible Project forward.
- **Intersectional Feminist Framework** - We will be examining all of our materials and resources to incorporate the concepts and values of our stated framework.
- Continue to engage in new partnerships around research and practice.
- New partnership between FREDA SFU, BCYSTH, and the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children, examining violence against women in immigrant and refugee communities.
- **Advocacy and Social Media** - We will be exploring how to increase our advocacy ability using social media.



BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses

Suite 325, 119 West Pender St. Vancouver, BC V6B 1S5

T: 604.669.6943 or 1.800.661.1040 | F: 604.682.6962 | www.bcysth.ca