

Joint Letter from the Board of Directors & Executive Director

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) has had a busy 2014 / 2015 fiscal year. It has been a year of transition and growth for the agency with our new Executive Director, Catherine Talbott stepping in half way through the year to provide stewardship to the organization. Catherine spent time getting to know the members, staff team, Board and community partners and was quickly immersed in the work of the society. The team have captured a vision for stronger member supports, programs, advocacy and training over the current fiscal year and beyond.

The past year has once again brought a significant number of deaths of women and children in BC at the hands of their abuser. With programs and services stretched to and beyond capacity, challenging circumstances continue in our province for women and children fleeing domestic and sexual violence. Funding levels for programs have not increased and our members continue to do more with less. With this in mind, the work of our member organizations must be commended and we express our immense gratitude for the work you do each day keeping women and children safe and providing a choice other than living with violence. **THANK YOU for your dedication.**

BCSTH has continued to build on a variety of projects while working to add innovative and new areas of interest for the benefit of our membership. Advancements have been made on gathering insight from women and children in a multitude of areas and the development of wise and best practices has begun to better meet the needs of women and children while living in and working with transition houses. Training was delivered across the province in many areas over the fiscal year and feedback from these events is being incorporated into future trainings. BCSTH has undertaken a number of program evaluations over the past year to ensure that we are delivering the best possible training to our sector. The evaluations will cross over into the next fiscal year and the reports will be available to the membership.

BCSTH has been a strong advocate at both the provincial and federal government levels on behalf of the membership which has included such things as the procurement process with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the advancement of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) Domestic Violence training and the Innovation and Sustainability Leadership Group. We continue our work with the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses and we are in the process of building a number of new national and provincial partnerships. BCSTH has been a lead partner in the development of a province wide training forum with multiple partners that will be delivered in 2015.

We anticipate that the 2015 / 2016 year will bring new opportunities and challenges in continuing our work to bring a strong voice to the Transition Houses, Second and Third Stage Houses, CWWA (Children Who Witness Abuse) and VIP (Violence is Preventable) programs across our province. BCSTH is committed to the membership and we hope to hear from you and engage in meaningful dialogue over the next year. We believe that together we can continue to make a difference for women and children in BC.

Anti-Violence Housing Programs & Services

With Funding from BC Housing, BCSTH supported 124 Transition House programs across BC; Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses and Safe Homes. This support included:

- Tracking and providing weekly updates to members on emerging violence against-women issues, trainings, events and resources.
- Supporting members on issues including crisis intervention, conflict resolution, intake, eligibility, understaffing, funding gaps, records management, subpoenas, Family Law queries, safe use of technology and accreditation.
- Developing the BCSTH Policy Template Guide: Sample Policies for Transition Houses, Second Stage Housing and Safe Homes.
- Hosting in-person meetings for Transition House, Second Stage House and Safe Home workers at the Annual Training Forum (ATF) and attending a regional meeting in the Kootenay area.
- Analysing provincial initiatives and providing feedback from members and women fleeing violence about the BC Missing Person's Act, Family Law Act changes, Child, Family & Community Services Act (CFCSA) amendments, Safe Relationships, Safe Children initiative, Integrated Case Management System (ICM) and MOJ's proposed Serving Victims of Crime procurement process.
- Representing membership in provincial policy meetings with MCFD, MOJ, BC Housing, Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), Community Coordination for Women's Safety (CCWS) and at the national level with the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses.



Anti-Violence Children & Youth Programs & Services

CWWA Programs

With funding from the Ministry of Justice, BCSTH supported 95 communities across BC to deliver CWWA programming. This support included:

- Facilitating networking, referrals, information-sharing, program coordination, professional development and capacity building.
- Conducting surveys of CWWA Counsellors for their input on the MOJ's proposed Serving Victims of Crime procurement process, the training needs and areas of support for CWWA counsellors, an Emergency Loan Fund and BCSTH's ATF.
- Facilitating an in-person meeting for CWWA Counsellors at the ATF, attending 2 regional meetings for CWWA counsellors.
- Mentoring CWWA volunteers and assisting with orientation of new CWWA counsellors.
 - Providing feedback about CWWA program concerns to the First Call Coalition and PODV; child protection issues to MCFD and MOJ; domestic violence training to MCFD; Safe Relationships, Safe Children to PODV.
 - Delivering Safety Net Training via Victims of Crime Funding from Department of Justice.
 - Responding to emerging issues and trends highlighted by CWWA workers including service provision to children in the context of co-guardianship under the Family Law Act and the new amendments to the CFCSA.
- Engaging in public education and prevention activities about the impact of violence on children and youth and the hypersexualization of young women through harmful product messaging.

VIP Programs

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

- The VIP program reached over 10,000 participants in schools and communities throughout BC.
- CWWA counsellors from 36 community-based organizations facilitated the program in over 120 schools.
- Partnerships were developed with We Can BC and the BC Teachers Federation.

BCSTH Training

In-Person Trainings

- Annual Training Forum: 240 participants attended three days of keynotes, networking sessions, and 30 workshops with the theme of supporting Aboriginal women and children fleeing violence.
- 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.

This three-year project is co-led by BCSTH, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, and the SFU FRED Centre for Research. 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.

Phase 1 of the project was completed early this year. The research findings and next steps were presented during a one day workshop in Vancouver and the final report and infographic were released shortly after. The report summarizes and breaks down the research findings into five broad key themes and shares key recommendations and next steps. Please visit BCSTH's website for more information.

Building Supports Project

With funding from BC Housing and the Vancouver Foundation, this project addresses recommendations in the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry about Aboriginal women's access to transitional housing. The project will develop a flexible and culturally informed model of service that supports women and their children accessing transition housing programs in or near First Nations/Aboriginal communities.

The completion of Phase 1 has included consulting with an Advisory Committee, running focus groups with Aboriginal women with lived experience, conducting a literature review and piloting 3 agency-based trainings. The second and final phase of the project will be completed in 2015-16 and will include a set of Promising Practices and a Training Framework focused on increasing Aboriginal women's access to transitional housing in BC.

Aboriginal Women's Consultation Project



BC Housing



BRITISH COLUMBIA



Canada

vancouver foundation



CKNW Orphans FUND

Department of Justice Canada / Ministère de la Justice Canada

Status of Women Canada / Condition féminine Canada

Thank you! BC Society of Transition Houses gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our funders.

Online Trainings (BCSTH Online Community)

Our online community had over 200 participants 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
- Reducing Stress and Burnout: A Free Webinar for Anti-Violence Workers
- VIP: Violence is Preventable for Very Important People 2nd Edition

BCSTH Library

The BCSTH Library has an online database of resources selected to support BCSTH staff and members in their work with women, children and youth. Topics of interest this year included bystander intervention; honour killing, workbooks on CBT, DBT and ACT, transgenderwomen, children's books on meditation and sensation, boys and masculinity, fathering, multi-cultural resources and Francophone resources.

- 104 hard copy and online resources were added to the database, bringing the total to 1,576
- 881 books were borrowed by 80 members
- 214 member-written reviews of 164 resources can be found in the database