



PEACE FOR CANADIAN CHILDREN & YOUTH

Supporting Children and Youth in  
Canadian Women's Shelters and Transition Houses  
2021-2024

August 2025



Prevention  
Education  
Advocacy  
Counselling  
Empowerment

*PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth: Training and Peer Mentorship for Women's Shelters in Northern, Rural and Remote Communities to Build Specialized Supports for Children & Youth Survivors and Witnesses of Gender-Based Violence.*



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

Canada

**This project has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.**



BC Society of  
Transition Houses



WOMEN'S  
SHELTERS  
CANADA | HÉBERGEMENT  
FEMMES  
CANADA



## Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the PEACE Program counsellors from British Columbia who served as mentors. The importance of their willing support, expertise and enthusiasm for mentoring the PEACE approach with workers across Canada cannot be overstated.

Our appreciation and thanks to the members of the project's Indigenous Advisory Council, who provided input and guidance towards the development and adaptation of the materials and training program.

Recognition and appreciation of all the women's shelter workers from coast to coast to coast who participated in the training and mentorship and took the time to provide feedback through the evaluation process with reflection and thoughtfulness. Their participation helped guide the PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth project to be more relevant and responsive to the needs of shelter workers in rural, remote and northern communities supporting women, children and youth who have experienced or been exposed to violence.

*With gratitude we recognize that the BC Society of Transition Houses' office is located on unceded Coast Salish territory, shared by the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and sə́lilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.*



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Report .....	5
Part I .....	7
Project Overview .....	7
Project Partners.....	8
<i>The BC Society of Transition Houses.....</i>	8
<i>Women's Shelters Canada .....</i>	8
Who Participated.....	9
<i>Transition Houses and Women's Shelter Workers .....</i>	9
<i>What participants said about using the PEACE approach in their work:.....</i>	10
The Cohorts .....	10
Peace Map of Canada.....	13
Sharing the Foundations of PEACE .....	14
<i>The PEACE Approach.....</i>	14
<i>What participants said about using the PEACE approach in their work.....</i>	14
<i>Training .....</i>	15
<i>Mentorship.....</i>	16
<i>Comments from participants included: .....</i>	16
<i>Some observations shared by mentors included: .....</i>	17
<i>Resources .....</i>	19
<i>BCSTH Online Courses .....</i>	20
<i>Hope Chest.....</i>	21
Part II .....	23
Project Evaluation .....	23
Issues Facing Shelters.....	24
Greatest Achievement - Fostering Connections.....	25
Biggest Challenges - Capacity and Connectivity .....	26
Key Findings About the Project .....	29
<i>Comments from participants included: .....</i>	32
Promising Practices .....	37
Conclusion.....	42
APPENDICES .....	45
Appendix A – Participating Shelters .....	45
Appendix B – BC Agencies Providing Mentors.....	52



## About This Report

This summary report was prepared by the BC Society of Transition Houses and Women's Shelters Canada as both an advocacy and legacy document that highlights some of the many challenges faced by workers in women's shelters and transition houses throughout Canada as they support children, youth, their mothers and caregivers seeking safety from violence and abuse.

It is also a testament to the great spirit, compassion, courage and necessary sense of practicality that women's shelter workers bring to their shared commitment to helping people impacted by gender-based violence.



---

*"I learned effective play with children to gently move into building trust with them, and including Mom if possible to help address her needs as well."*

*– PEACE participant*

---



# PART I



## Part I

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Launched in 2021, this three-year project was a partnership between BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) and Women's Shelter Canada (WSC). PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth: Training and Peer Mentorship for Women's Shelters in Northern, Rural and Remote Communities to Build Specialized Supports for Children & Youth Survivors and Witnesses of Gender-Based Violence provided training and mentorship to shelter workers in northern, rural and remote areas across Canada. Based on BCSTH's long-running PEACE Program, the project focused on enhancing the capacity of women's shelters to offer specialized supports for vulnerable children and youth who have experienced and/or witnessed gender-based violence.

This national project delivered training in French and English to frontline women's shelter workers from 132 organizations in every province and territory in Canada. Mentorship was then provided by experienced PEACE Program counsellors from BC on an ongoing basis for several months following completion of the training, so workers could meet regularly to share information and resources, strategies on ways to address common work challenges and share encouragement and support.

By the time the project ended in March 2024, project results were used to generate a legacy blueprint of promising practices to be made available for widespread use through an online portal hosted by Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada.

The training and mentorship for this project were based on the successful "Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment" (PEACE) Program for children and youth experiencing violence. As of 2024, this psycho-educational program is currently delivered at 87 sites by 155 counsellors in British Columbia. Originally known as the "Children Who Witness Abuse" (CWWA) Program, the PEACE Program was created by BC transition houses in 1992 to provide dedicated counselling supports to children coming into women's shelters.

This three-year project was made possible with funding from Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada as part of their Safe Kids Initiative, which made a response to the escalation in gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic a key priority and recognized the unique needs of children and youth during the pandemic.



## PROJECT PARTNERS

### THE BC SOCIETY OF TRANSITION HOUSES

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) <https://www.bcsth.ca/> is a member-based, provincial umbrella organization that, through leadership, support and collaboration, enhances the continuum of services and strategies to respond to, prevent and end violence against all women, children and youth. BCSTH provides support to Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses, Safe Homes, Long-term housing and PEACE and Violence is Preventable (VIP) programs in British Columbia through training, advocacy, research and resources. BCSTH has 136 member programs providing over 200 services for women, children and youth fleeing violence and at risk of violence.



### WOMEN'S SHELTERS CANADA

Women's Shelters Canada (WSC) <https://www.endvaw.ca/> brings together 14 provincial and territorial shelter organizations and supports the over 550 shelters and transition houses across the country for women and children fleeing violence. WSC works as a unified voice to collaborate, educate, and innovate for systemic change that ends violence against women. Shelters support women and children fleeing violence. WSC supports the shelters.







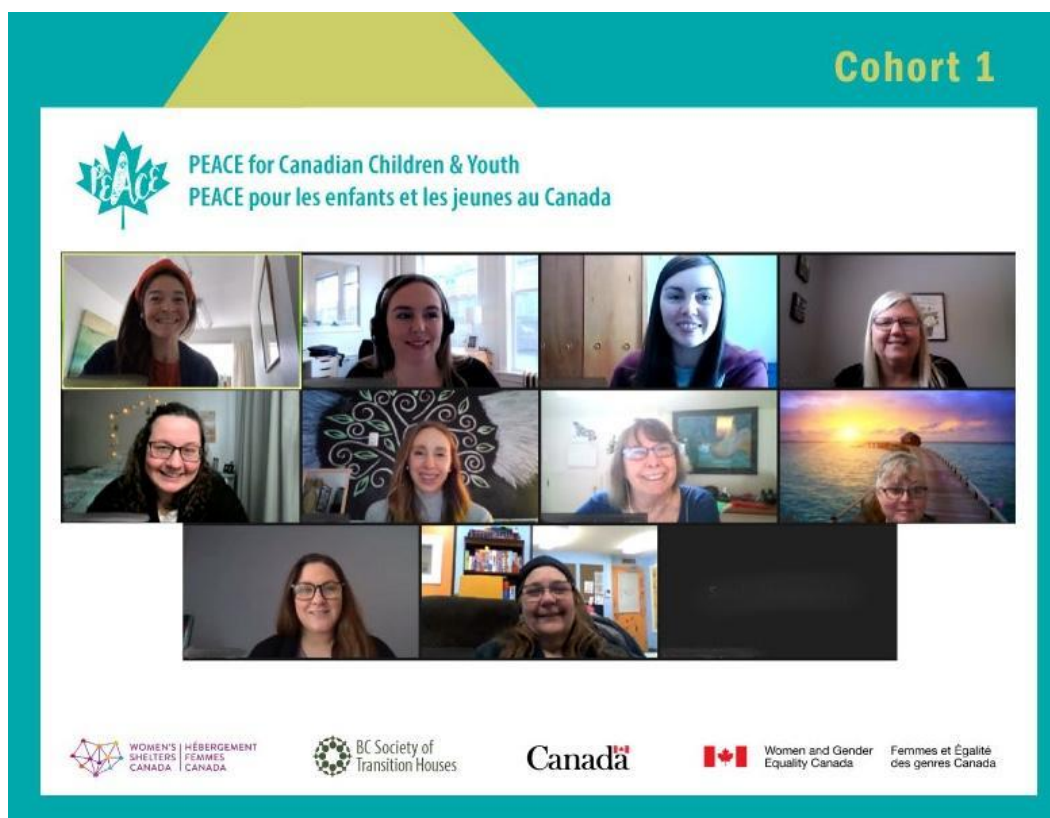
## WHO PARTICIPATED

### TRANSITION HOUSES AND WOMEN'S SHELTER WORKERS

Transition House and Women's Shelter Workers from coast to coast to coast participated.

The project's focus was on enhancing the capacity of women's shelters to offer specialized supports for vulnerable children and youth who have experienced and/or witnessed gender-based violence.

To this end, PEACE training and mentorship were delivered in both English and French to workers in every province and territory in Canada. A total of 275 workers from 132 shelter organizations participated. Everyone learned that many of the challenges and issues they faced in their work were shared by others, regardless of their location.



*Cohort 1 brought together workers from four organizations in Ontario.*



#### WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT USING THE PEACE APPROACH IN THEIR WORK:

*"I am more aware of what residents may need & move at their pace, before taking the program I was rushing in and trying to help & not giving them the chance to settle in."*

*"I learned that when people are in a heightened state, talking about their trauma is not beneficial and it is okay and helpful to stop them and help them regulate before continuing. I also learned that no one is a passive bystander in abuse. They are always resisting and showing resiliency. Showing them how they resisted validates them and gives them a sense of power/control."*

*"...while I did not make any changes to my work, there were new pieces of information for me to consider. Some of my biggest takeaways were talking about intersectionality, as well as advocating for mothers."*

## THE COHORTS

Participants were grouped into different cohorts, and these cohorts stayed together for both training and mentorship.

Sometimes a cohort was made up of people from the same region, province or territory, like the Maritimes, the Prairies, Québec or Nunavut, and sometimes a cohort brought together people from one coast to another with a few places and time zones in between.

There were 28 cohorts in total. Of this number, 22 were English speaking and 6 were French speaking. While most of the French-speaking participants were from Québec, there were also participants from Francophone organizations in Ontario and New Brunswick.



Workers from five Quebec shelters formed Cohort 19.

---

*“Je conseille fortement cette formation. Elle permet de bien intégrer l'information pour venir en aide à cette clientèle. Elle permet d'avoir des outils utiles. Le partage entres intervenantes ainsi que des succès des autres permette d'apprendre et d'intervenir plus efficacement.” [I strongly recommend this training. It provides a good integration of the information in order to help our clients. It provided useful tools. The sharing and participation of the other trainees and their success provided effective learning and training.] – PEACE participant*

---

A total of 30 Indigenous women's shelters participated, which were grouped in 5 cohorts developed specifically for Indigenous shelters, including 2 Nunavut cohorts that serve Inuit communities. Workers from a number of Indigenous organizations participated in other cohorts, as well.



Due to extreme connectivity challenges, it was not possible to deliver virtual training to workers in Nunavut. As a result, the PEACE project team travelled to Iqaluit twice to deliver training and mentorship in person to workers from remote northern communities who came together in one place with the support of the Nunavut Department of Family Services.

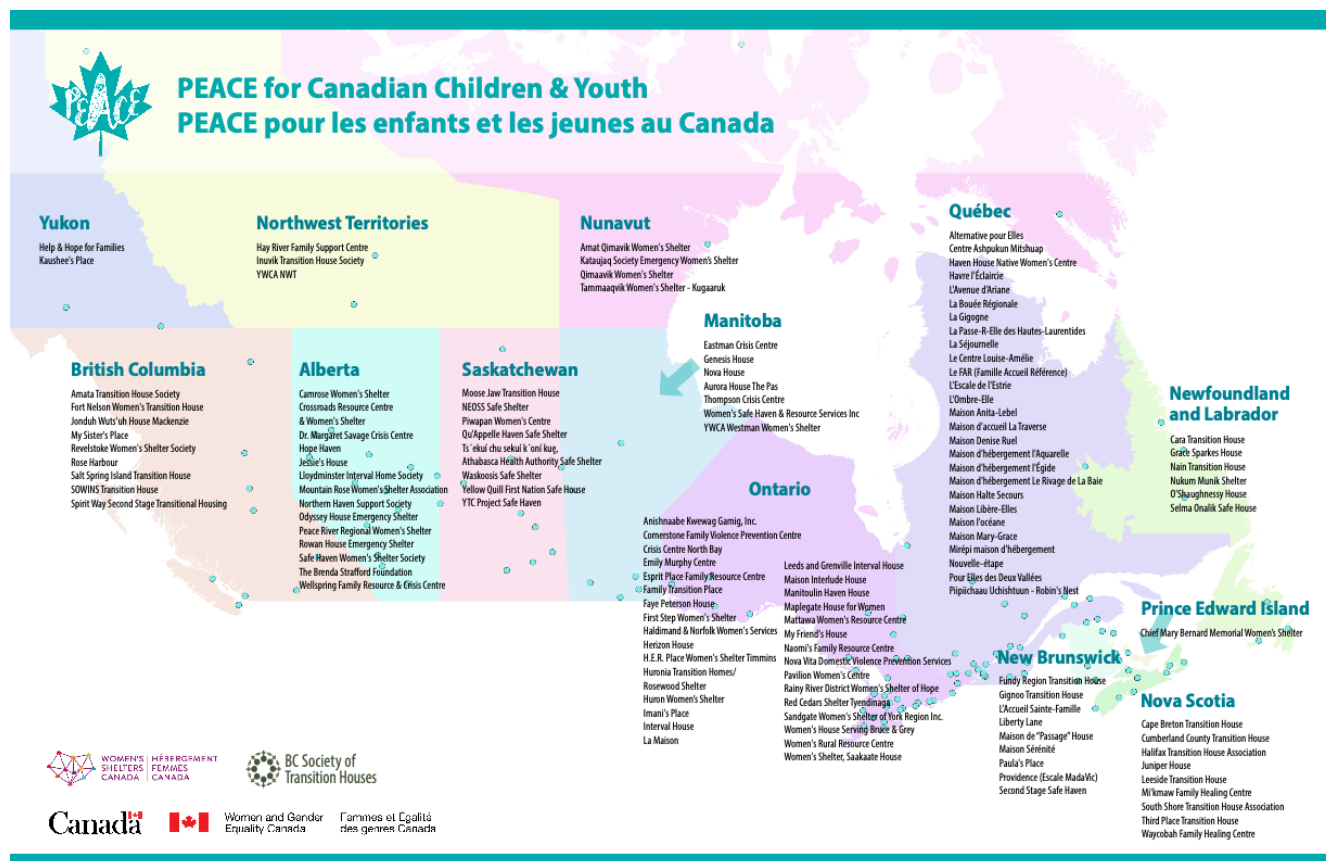


*Shelter workers travelled from remote communities throughout Nunavut to meet in Iqaluit for in-person PEACE training and mentorship in March 2023.*



## PEACE MAP OF CANADA

This map provides a listing of organizations that participated in the PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth project by province and territory.



PEACE Map of Canada can be downloaded at

<https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/PEACECanadaMap.pdf>

For a complete list of participating organizations, please see [Appendix A](#).



## SHARING THE FOUNDATIONS OF PEACE

BCSTH shared the foundations of its long-running PEACE counselling program for children and youth with women's shelter workers across the country through training, mentorship and resources.

### THE PEACE APPROACH

The essence of the PEACE approach is to uphold the dignity of mothers and their children while shining a light on the many resourceful and creative ways that they resist and respond to the violence in their lives.

Recognizing that people always resist violence, the PEACE approach encourages workers to help mothers, children, and youth become aware of their own acts of resistance, highlight their responses to violence and harm and build on that foundation.

### WHAT PARTICIPANTS SAID ABOUT USING THE PEACE APPROACH IN THEIR WORK

*"This training has made me more aware of the language used when speaking with women. I really appreciated the training on upholding a woman's dignity and highlighting all the ways in which the woman has resisted violence."*

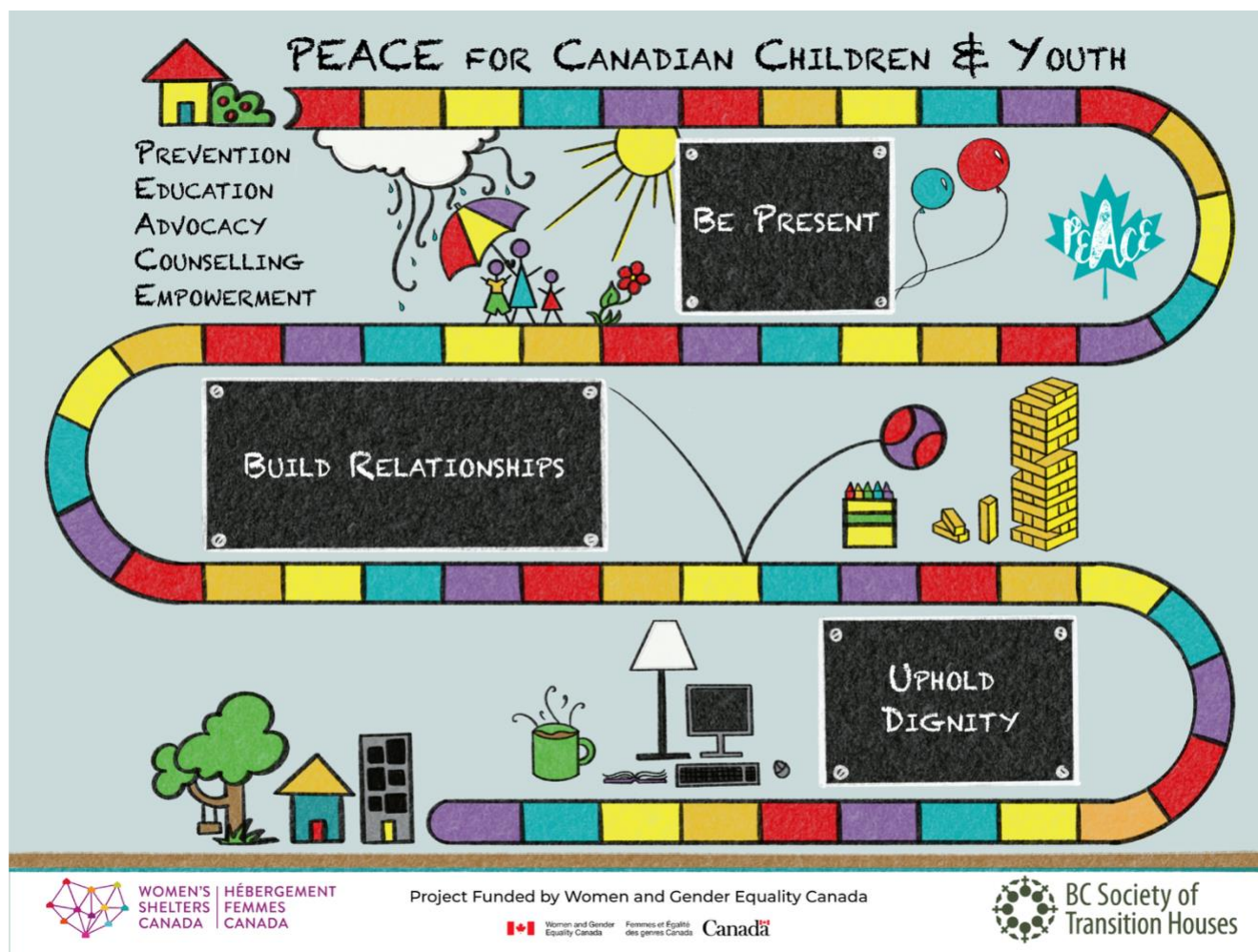
*"In my workplace there is more dialogue about how to best support mom and child in healing together."*

*"Making a conscious effort not to judge mothers by my ideas of what being a 'good mom' looks like...Treating each and every person with equal value, as a person's value does not depend on anything but they're being a person."*

*"I have paid more attention to the children and youth's life circumstances and adapted my behaviour towards them accordingly."*

*"I have been able to incorporate a more co-active approach to my work, bringing together my previous knowledge while also holding each child in a more resilient light."*





## TRAINING

The 2-day in-person PEACE training typically provided by BCSTH to PEACE Program counsellors in British Columbia was adapted to be delivered virtually to frontline workers in transition houses and women's shelters in northern, rural and remote communities throughout Canada. The only exception to this was two in-person trainings delivered in Nunavut due to connectivity challenges.



The PEACE team included three trainers, 2 English-speaking and 1 French-speaking.

---

*“The group discussions were fantastic. I really feel a connection to the women in this group and our shared experiences. I feel that the major strength of this training has been fostering a connection in that we are not alone and that there are resources available to us.”*

*“I appreciate the opportunity to be open, vulnerable, and real. I have never felt so much solidarity in a group of strangers. This has been a truly unique, inspiring, fulfilling experience. I am grateful to have been a part of it.”*

---

#### MENTORSHIP

Following training, ongoing mentorship was provided to participants with the goal of fostering connections and peer support that might help develop sustainable communities of practice for workers.

Every mentor was a trained BC PEACE Program counsellor who attended their cohort’s training and then went on to meet at regular intervals with the group within a framework of 12 to 18 months. Mentors acted as team leaders to organize scheduling, develop mentorship plans with the group, share resources and facilitate discussion on topics of interest.

Twenty-two PEACE counsellors generously and enthusiastically supported 28 cohorts in all, with some mentors supporting more than one cohort.

**For the list of BC organizations that provided PEACE mentors, please see [Appendix B](#).**

#### COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

*“J’ai adoré faire cette formation et avoir accès à du mentorat. Toutes les intervenantes jeunes devraient s’y inscrire. [I loved the training and having access to the mentor. We plan to use all the activities for youth and children.]”*

*“Having a community of dedicated workers to connect with and brainstorm with, which reduces isolation in the work and makes the work easier.”*





*“Le partage entre intervenantes (trucs, debriefing, façons de faire et réalité d'ailleurs) ainsi que les outils offerts durant la formation.” [Sharing between participants – ideas and tips, debriefing, new skills, and reality checks, as well as the tools presented during the trainings]*

*“The mentorship gives me the confidence & skills to give more support to clients/residents when I find myself out of ideas.”*

*“It was helpful, reminds you that you aren't alone. Working in a shelter, you get used to being in a bubble.”*

*“Having a community of dedicated workers to connect with and brainstorm with, which reduces isolation in the work and makes the work easier.”*

*“Connection and safety within the group made for an incredibly positive experience. I believe the connections will last a lifetime.”*

#### **SOME OBSERVATIONS SHARED BY MENTORS INCLUDED:**

*“The women in my cohort really enjoy sharing stories regarding their frontline work and enjoy connecting with one another over similar challenges in the work.”*

*“More than once, participants said they felt better after our meetings, connected and supported.”*

*“What I did see was participants [in mentor groups] taking risks and having courage to ask questions, contact those in charge and be authentic in their challenges.”*

*“The need for connection and validation continues as strongly as it did on day one, however, there is a veil that has been lifted in terms of feeling confident and comfortable in asking for peer support from those outside of their organizations.”*



## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This certificate is awarded to

# Jane Smith

as proof the above participated in  
PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth Virtual Training and Mentorship 2022



**PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth:**  
Training and Peer Mentorship for Women's Shelters in Northern, Rural and  
Remote Communities to Build Specialized Supports for Children & Youth  
Survivors and Witnesses of Gender-Based Violence

Amy S. Fitzgerald, Executive Director, BC Society of Transition Houses



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

This project has been funded by  
Women and Gender Equality Canada.

*Each participant received a PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth Certificate of Completion*



## RESOURCES

A PEACE Road Map for Shelter Workers was developed to share the fundamental values and approaches at the heart of the PEACE program in a way that would be useful to workers in shelters and transition houses. A supplementary Ideas and Activities Workbook for supporting children and youth was also developed.



Supporting children and youth in Canadian women's shelters and transition houses

January 2022

Download at <https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/PEACE-for-Canadian-Children-Youth-a-Roadmap-8-2-2022.pdf>



Workbook for Supporting Children and Youth:  
Ideas and Activities

January 2022

Includes Activity Worksheets that can be downloaded and printed.

Download at <https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/PEACE-for-Canadian-Children-Youth-Workbook-3-15-2022.pdf>



## BCSTH ONLINE COURSES

In addition, free access to BCSTH online courses in French and English was also made available to all participants. This offered everyone the opportunity to pursue some online learning at their own pace if they wished. The courses offered were:

- Foundations in Violence Against Women;
- PEACE 1 – Introduction to Working with Children and Youth Experiencing Violence;
- PEACE 2 – Supporting Children and Youth Experiencing Violence Against Women, and;
- Violence is Preventable (VIP) Program.

---

*“Chez moi, j’ai remarqué le désir de vouloir utiliser davantage d’outils avec les enfants.” [For me, I have more desire to take advantage of the tools when working with children]*

*“The training was uplifting and rejuvenating, and I felt like I have actually learned something that can be applied to practice. I also really like the online courses that we are able to access through the BCSTH. They provide meaningful context and information.”*

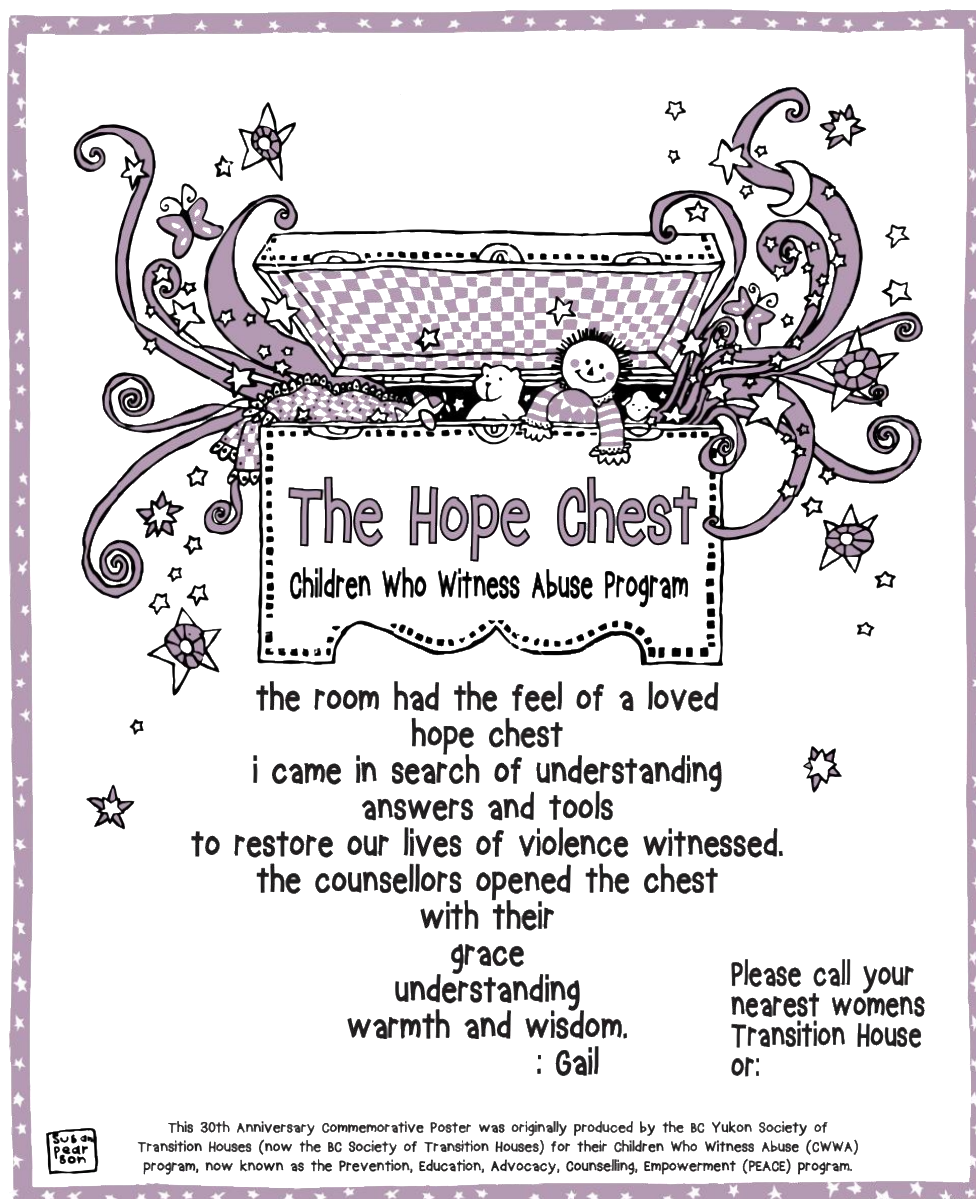
*“I really enjoyed doing the online training as it help[ed me] understand the background of shelters & learning more on how people will respond or not respond to workers.”*

---



## HOPE CHEST

The Hope Chest poster commemorating the 30th anniversary of the PEACE Program (formerly Children Who Witness Abuse) was shared with participants.



Download at <https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Hope-Chest-Poster-ENG.pdf>



# PART II



## Part II

### PROJECT EVALUATION

A project evaluation report was produced at the request of the BC Society of Transition Houses and Women and Gender Equality Canada. It was prepared by Women's Shelters Canada and Snyder Consulting of Vancouver, BC. Much of what follows was articulated in that evaluation report.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed. The main data collection tools were the initial application form, feedback forms after training sessions, and separate online surveys for participants and mentors that went out midway through the project and again near the end, gathering information on their experiences and observations.

Online surveys asked participants for their thoughts on how the PEACE training and mentorship had generated changes for themselves, their clients and their workplaces. Mentors shared their experiences and provided observations on the progress of the participants in their group. All survey responses were anonymous and not linked to identifiers such as specific cohorts.

The evaluation incorporated ongoing analysis, reflection and learning for use and adaptation throughout the project. For example, the project team participated in a focused group discussion about how and why adaptations to the training materials and programming were made. Similarly, the mentors had ongoing review and support with the project team to reflect on their mentoring experience and how to support their shelter worker cohorts.



*Cohort 22 brought together workers from shelters in Alberta and Manitoba.*

## ISSUES FACING SHELTERS

It is important to recognize the broader context affecting shelters and shelter workers across Canada, particularly in remote, rural and northern communities. COVID-19 related challenges and short staffing issues significantly impacted the transition house and women's shelter organizations across Canada while demand for services increased.

The COVID-19 pandemic deepened issues of staff exhaustion, high workload, and recruitment challenges, which impacted the implementation of the PEACE training. Also noteworthy is the isolation felt by workers in this field, particularly in rural, remote, and northern communities.





The organizations supported by this project were typically smaller organizations with small staffing groups, located in smaller communities that may not have a lot of other resources or support.



*Workers in Cohort 7 were from Indigenous shelters in Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Quebec.*

## GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT - FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

Based on feedback from participants and the experiences of trainers and mentors, the project's greatest achievement was the fostering of connections and peer support between workers in different organizations and regions.

This helped break the isolation often experienced by workers in northern, rural and remote communities and gave workers an understanding that they are not alone or unique in the challenges they face in their work. This mutual support and information



sharing enhanced workers' abilities to provide service and support to vulnerable children and youth in shelter and their families.

Participants often talked about how useful it was to learn from each other, saying that discussions with other participants were important ways to share ideas, problem-solve, and acquire new resources and skills.



*Cohort 16 brought together workers from distinctly different parts of Canada – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.*

## BIGGEST CHALLENGES - CAPACITY AND CONNECTIVITY

### Capacity

COVID-19 related challenges and short staffing issues significantly impacted women's shelters across Canada while demand for services increased. The pandemic deepened issues of staff exhaustion, high workload, and recruitment challenges, which impacted



the implementation of the PEACE training. Some eligible organizations reported they simply could not spare staff to attend virtual training and mentorship or only in very limited numbers.

Further to this, there was the challenge to find a balance between providing low-barrier training and mentorship for under-resourced workers while fostering robust participation. In an attempt to make the training as accessible as possible to under-resourced workers, allowances were made for women's shelter workers to attend the training while on shift when necessary. Results of this approach varied, but this meant that some participants were not able to be fully present for all of the training or needed to participate with cameras off so clients would not be accidentally seen. These factors impacted the training experience of the whole group.

Barriers to participation rooted in chronic capacity challenges were not the fault of any individual or organization, but rather a reflection of larger structural and systemic challenges caused by underfunding in the sector as a whole, made worse by the effects of the pandemic.



*In February 2024, the PEACE team travelled to Iqaluit for the second time to share the PEACE approach with women's shelter workers in Nunavut.*

## Connectivity

Connectivity challenges in the North, specifically in Nunavut, were so extreme that delivery of virtual training was not possible there, and so the decision was made to send the PEACE team there in person. The project encountered difficulties due to poor connectivity in several remote communities in other regions, as well.

Having said that, the delivery of virtual training in every province and territory other than Nunavut demonstrated that it is a viable platform that can reach and connect many workers, particularly those in rural and isolated communities who might not otherwise receive support. This was true for both the training and mentorship sessions. While virtual gatherings are not, in many ways, equal to in-person events, they nonetheless have an effective role to play for future learning and knowledge exchange activities.



*Cohort 2 was based in the Maritimes, with workers from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador.*

## KEY FINDINGS ABOUT THE PROJECT

The PEACE Project was successful in providing training, mentoring and ongoing support to shelter workers in rural, remote and northern communities across Canada. There is a great need for this kind of training to support shelter workers and the children and youth, and the caregivers/women they serve. Most participants stated they have made positive changes, particularly in their work with children, following the PEACE training and mentorship groups.

---

*"I think [the] PEACE program helped me solidify my self-confidence. I think it made me more comfortable working with youth."*

*"I have found I have gained more confidence as a child advocate, which is reflected in my work with children and youth."*

---





### Key Finding 1:

The PEACE project reached many shelter workers in rural, remote and northern shelters across Canada.

- There was participation from every province and territory from coast to coast to coast.
- The PEACE project succeeded in reaching 275 shelter workers in 132 rural, remote and northern shelters across Canada.
- A total of 30 Indigenous women's shelters participated, which were grouped in 5 cohorts developed specifically for Indigenous shelters, including 2 Nunavut cohorts that serve Inuit communities. Workers from a number of Indigenous organizations participated in other cohorts, as well.
- This was achieved through extensive and creative efforts to reach shelters, encourage participation, and ensure that particular contextual needs were addressed to the extent possible.



*Workers in this cohort were from the Prairie provinces – Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.*



### Key Finding 2:

PEACE materials, tools, training and mentoring were continuously adapted for the contextual realities of shelter workers.

- PEACE resources and training materials were adapted specifically to be highly accessible and practical for workers in transition house and shelter environments.
- The 2-day in-person PEACE training historically delivered by BCSTH in British Columbia to PEACE Program counsellors was adapted to be delivered virtually to frontline workers in transition houses and women's shelters.
- Two in-person trainings were held in Nunavut, and the mentoring component varied depending on the needs of the shelter worker participants.

*Here are some comments from participants:*

*"Chez moi, j'ai remarqué le désir de vouloir utiliser davantage d'outils avec les enfants." [For me, I have more desire to take advantage of the tools when working with children]*

*"I enjoyed the videos and puppets. The use of these teachings will help me break through to the young ones we work with."*

### Key Finding 3:

Women's shelter workers increased their knowledge and adjusted their attitudes and beliefs through training.

- All feedback provided immediately post-training indicated that women's shelter workers appreciated the training and feel more confident and informed about how to support children and their caregivers who have been exposed to violence.
- Participants noted they have better listening skills, are more attentive to the needs and desires of both women and child clients and feel more confident in their use of various resources and tools.
- Participants agreed the training strengthened their knowledge of: how children and youth respond to and resist the violence in their families; the foundational principles that can guide their practice; how their values, assumptions and beliefs may influence their practice; and practical ways to support women as mothers whose children experience violence and to support children and youth.



#### COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

*"I have made more of a conscious effort to acknowledge the ways mothers and children have resisted violence in their lives and have been working on using a strengths-based approach that focuses and builds off what is going well."*

*"This training has made me more aware of the language used when speaking with women. I really appreciated the training on upholding a woman's dignity and highlighting all the ways in which the woman has resisted violence."*

*"How I engage with mothers and children has shifted slightly, I still focus on the same end goals but the method to achieve this goal has changed. My personal shift has positively influenced my workplace."*



*Workers in this Francophone cohort were from eight organizations located in different regions of Quebec.*





#### Key Finding 4:

Women's shelter workers valued increased peer support and connection through the ongoing mentor groups.

- The vast majority of survey respondents report positive experiences with the PEACE mentoring.
- Women's shelter workers appreciated the mentoring group opportunities to connect with peers in other shelters.
- They commented on the discussions with other participants as important ways to share ideas, problem solve and acquire new resources and skills.

#### *Comments about what participants appreciated most included:*

*"I have most appreciated having a space to bring hard topics/challenging situations and get feedback from a variety of professionals in the field. Also, I appreciated getting more resources from the group leader."*

*"Building connections with other child advocates in my area and deepening my skill set."*

*"The learnings, but also the connection with other shelter workers. The knowledge that others are experiencing the same struggles and celebrating similar outcomes, and being able to openly speak to other workers about my struggles and concerns and heartbreaks when it comes to supporting families, and having them understand, as this work environment can be much different than other work environments."*

*"The women in my cohort really enjoy sharing stories regarding their frontline work and enjoy connecting with one another over similar challenges in the work." – PEACE mentor*



Cohort 27 included both coasts, from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, along with some participants from Alberta and Manitoba.

### Key Finding 5:

Mentors increased their self-confidence and facilitating capacity.

- Mentors stated that they gained personal satisfaction and that the individuals and groups provided ongoing mutual support.
- The mentors experienced personal growth in their skills and self-confidence.
- Mentors were satisfied with the support they received from the PEACE project to fulfill their mentoring role.

*Comments about what participants appreciated most included:*

*"I feel more confident in my abilities as a PEACE program counsellor. To be able to share my ideas and things I've created to help my program and then seeing the responses from other peers when I would show them really helped with my confidence in my position."*



*"The changes I see in myself is the importance of gathering all information necessary before beginning a project. I see myself being more curious, taking more initiative and assertive when there are challenges. I see myself wanting to be a part of the whole project, so I can fully understand my role and be able to assist others when they have questions or issues. I also really appreciate being able to contribute feedback."*

*"I really value being able to have organic conversations about the work and the sharing of knowledge and history and problem solving."*

*"I really enjoyed it and feel like we were able to provide quality, feet-on-the-ground tools for the participants who invested the time into the sessions. We sent out all the materials to the entire cohort and hope they can still use them without the context."*

*"It is very rewarding to be part of this project. I appreciate connecting with staff across the country that are doing anti-violence work and supporting women and children."*

*"While it was scary at first, it has grown into something I am proud to be a part of."*

*"I would love to do more. I have been doing this work for a long time and to help share my journey, my experiences and knowledge has been great."*

### Key Finding 6:

Women's shelter workers are beginning to implement more PEACE values, activities, and approaches at shelters.

- Most women's shelter workers stated they have made changes in their work since participating in the PEACE training.
- Some women's shelter workers were beginning to incorporate the PEACE values, activities and approaches though many structural and contextual obstacles remain.
- Shelter workers particularly noted changes in their work with children and mothers.

### Comments about what participants appreciated most included:

*"Pour le moment rien [mais] je vais appliquer plusieurs des techniques [quand] notre garderie ouvre au travail . Sa va être une garderie spécialiser pour les enfants qui ont vécu du trauma" [Nothing right now, but I expect to use several techniques when our nursery opens. It will be a specialized childcare for children who have experienced trauma.]*

*"A lot of information was new to me. One thing that I plan to look at is adding is safety planning for children."*



*"I'm more of an active listener and looking out for visual cues of clients, I also let them lead/start conversation."*

*"Overall, the biggest change I saw was having them think in a different way. Again, their experiences working in a transition house mainly brought their focus to the women and gender diverse individuals seeking safety and the focus was less on the children that were towed along with these individuals..." – PEACE mentor*

### Key Finding 7:

Long-term impacts of the PEACE project cannot be assessed at this time.

- Given the short time frame of the PEACE project, the evaluation did not anticipate being able to make any determinations regarding the longer-term outcomes for children and their caregivers.
- The team explored whether existing data could be used to determine if any changes pre- and post-training could be identified but determined that this was not feasible.
- Anecdotal evidence provides insights into the type of changes that might be seen over time.





*Cohort 13 brought together workers from Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.*

## PROMISING PRACTICES

The project evaluation identified some Promising Practices for future implementation of training to support women's shelter workers with women and children who have experienced or been exposed to violence.

It noted that reflection, learning and adaptation were central to the PEACE program. The most important finding is that flexibility and adaptation in implementation will always be needed to meet the needs and realities of shelter workers in rural, remote and northern communities.

The following Promising Practices are offered as possibilities to consider for future training in the PEACE approach and any similar national training programs in the shelter sector:

Integrate the adapted PEACE materials at all stages of the project to reinforce the values and approach.

- The French-speaking cohorts used the PEACE Road Map and other adapted materials during the training and mentoring because there were limited French resources to draw on. They found it worked well.
- Adopting this approach in the English-speaking trainings could help ensure participants are familiar with the materials and resources available right from the beginning and know to refer back to them in their work when seeking information or activities to use.



*Workers in Cohort 4 were from Manitoba and western Ontario.*

Build stronger bridges between the training and mentoring components to generate greater buy-in from women's shelter workers and greater confidence for mentors in fulfilling their role.

- Begin with a greater focus on the role, definition, purpose and function of the mentor and the mentor meetings. Provide more opportunities for connection and community between mentors and trainers.
- Consider having all mentors take the PEACE training together before delivery to shelter workers to advise, contribute and give feedback to the content of the training, to get clear on the parameters of their role and to build a stronger sense of community and purpose together.
- Start by forming the mentorship groups to build community and connection first before undertaking the training. Bridging the training and mentoring components more effectively may result in a greater degree of buy-in, connection, community, relevance, and even attendance throughout the project. It would also allow specifics pertaining to the needs of each cohort to inform or flavour the training as the trainers



could be led by the mentors in learning about the needs of each cohort and some of the challenges they face.

Offer the two-day training to the entire shelter staff.

- Offering the training to an entire shelter staff would create a greater likelihood of key messages and philosophy gaining ground within that shelter.
- When only one staff person at a women's shelter attends a training, the long-term impact of how women and children are met at a shelter is minimized, as it can be challenging for one staff person to change shelter processes, and there is frequent turnover among staff.
- There could be options for both frontline workers and managers to participate in a way that is comfortable and effective for all, with options to bring them together for some parts and have separate streams for other sections. Separating management and frontline staff in PEACE training and mentor cohorts may improve connection and support between participants.

Maintain peer connections through ongoing mentoring groups.

- The value of the training and ongoing mentoring groups for shelter workers to build and maintain peer connections cannot be overstated.
- Mentoring groups provide important peer connection for exchanging information and support for shelter workers. Holding space for women's shelter workers to meet fellow workers from other provinces is a way to provide support in an extremely challenging field. Shelter workers learn they are not alone and can share and get peer support about challenges. Feeling heard and connected may decrease exhaustion, stress and turnover.





*Cohort 24 brought together workers from Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan.*

## Adapt training materials.

- Adapted training materials need to be available to meet the needs of diverse participants and trainers.
- This includes fully funding all materials for French training and cohorts, including some of the video resources used in the training.
- Translation into other languages, such as Inuktitut, may also be important to provide the greatest access for learning and retention of content.

## Be flexible in the mode of instruction (virtual or in-person).

- The online delivery, while being more accessible, was also limiting in many ways. Communities without network connectivity had their own challenges.
- Providing in-person training for some communities allows PEACE training where it otherwise might not be able to take place, such as in shelters with few staff and little access to virtual training.





- Also, since connection and peer support has emerged as such an impactful takeaway, this training, if hosted in person, might generate more community building, breakdown of silos, and create momentum in the important work the sector is doing.

Provide alternative mentoring approaches.

- To meet the needs of women's shelter workers in different time zones, with challenging work schedules and internet connectivity.

Provide the time and resources to build connections and community among the training team members.

- Ongoing communication through monthly meetings of the core Project Team and reflection and review of evaluation findings built trust and provided opportunities to adapt programming to better fit women's shelter workers' needs and realities, as well as the knowledge, skills and resources of the Project Team and implementers (trainers and mentors).
- The three trainers were provided the opportunity to meet, to co-develop training and to work closely together. It meant that the training had symmetry, and trainers also had the flexibility to allow their different styles to shine through. The PEACE philosophy stands on reducing isolation, and this fundamental belief benefited the training team and all project members.
- Mentors were supported by the Project Team and were hosted by BCSTH to meet as a large group on a regular basis. Additionally, mentors could reach out on an individual basis to team members as needed, and 2 virtual drop-in meetings were held for mentors wanting to connect for debriefing or problem solving.



*This Francophone cohort from Quebec was made up of workers from seven different organizations throughout the province.*

## CONCLUSION

---

*"Thank you for the PEACE training. I had a great experience getting to know other people across the country who are working/fighting for the same cause. Fostering healing environments and supporting women and children who have experienced violence. You all do great work. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us."*  
(Shelter worker, 2024)

---

The PEACE Project appears to have been successful in providing training, mentoring and ongoing support to shelter workers in rural, remote and northern communities across Canada. As the contextual factors surrounding this project make clear, there is a great need for this kind of training to support women's shelter workers and the



children and youth and caregivers/women who are their clients. Offering the PEACE training to shelter workers in rural, remote, and northern communities is valuable for increasing knowledge, values, and approaches to support children and their caregivers who have experienced violence or been exposed to violence.

The materials and approach were adapted and revised to best meet the realities of shelter workers in a field with many challenges. The project succeeded in making connections and building relationships across Canada as women's shelter workers realized that there are other people in other places doing similar work. There was participation from every province and territory across the country, which is not always the case even on 'national' projects.

The vast majority of survey respondents were positive about the training and ongoing mentoring experiences. Most participants stated that they have made positive changes, particularly in their work with children, following the PEACE training and mentorship groups. They also report increased self-confidence and new tools and ideas for working with clients. The survey participants were particularly appreciative of the opportunities to share and connect with peers from other shelters. Mentors increased their capacity for facilitating groups, sharing PEACE materials, practices and values and increased their self-confidence and self-worth. The greatest contribution of the mentoring groups from the mentors' perspective is the development of peer support and networking within the cohorts and decreasing isolation for shelter workers.

Retention of staff is a major challenge in the women's shelter sector, especially in rural, remote and northern communities. Not only the hours and wages, but also the additional challenges posed by geography and vast distances, capacity issues due to chronic underfunding and the limited supports available to women and children in small and remote communities overall, mean workers are in need of regular support, supervision, training and guidance. It is challenging for shelter staff to integrate new approaches into their work without adequate staffing, support from leadership, and program/financial capacity. The expected contextual realities of high staff turnover rates, lack of organizational capacity, and funding issues meant that it was impossible



to follow up with all training participants and women's shelters. Finding ways to effectively support workers in this sector with enough ongoing support will continue to be a challenge until this sector is properly and fairly funded, workers are paid a dignified, working wage and their lifesaving work is valued as essential and funded sufficiently.

This training provided transition house workers with much-needed opportunities to be seen and honoured in their role. The sector is underpaid, under-resourced and underappreciated. The project and feedback received speak to the benefits of providing training, mentorship and connection to workers who are on the front line of supporting victims of gender-based violence across this vast country.



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A – PARTICIPATING SHELTERS

#### PEACE for Canadian Children & Youth

##### COHORT 1

Emily Murphy Centre	Perth	Ontario
Haldimand & Norfolk Women's Services	Haldimand and Norfolk	Ontario
Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey	Bruce and Grey County	Ontario
Women's Rural Resource Centre	Strathroy	Ontario

##### COHORT 2

Cara Transition House	Gander	Newfoundland and Labrador
Cumberland County Transition House (Autumn House)	Cumberland County	Nova Scotia
Fundy Region Transition House Inc.	St. Stephen	New Brunswick
Grace Sparkes House	Marystown	Newfoundland and Labrador
Third Place Transition House	Truro	Nova Scotia

##### COHORT 3

Ashpukun	Schefferville	Quebec
L'Ombre-Elle	Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts	Quebec
Pour Elles des Deux Vallées	Gatineau	Quebec

##### COHORT 4

Rainy River District Women's Shelter of Hope	Atikokan, District of Rainy River	Ontario
Women's Shelter, Saakaate House	Kenora	Ontario
Thompson Crisis Centre	Thompson	Manitoba
The Pas Committee for Women in Crisis aka Aurora House	The Pas	Manitoba



## COHORT 5

Yellow Quill Child and Family Prevention Services Inc	Yellow Quill First Nation	Saskatchewan
Ts'ekuí chu sekuí k'oní kuę, Athabasca Health Authority Safe Shelter	Black Lake	Saskatchewan
Qu'Appelle Haven Safe Shelter	Fort Qu'Appelle	Saskatchewan

## COHORT 6

Maison de "Passage" House Inc	Bathurst	New Brunswick
Providence (Escale MadaVic)	Edmundston	New Brunswick
L'Accueil Sainte-Famille	Tracadie	New Brunswick
Maison Interlude House	Hawkesbury	Ontario

## COHORT 7

Robin's Nest Shelter	Waskaganish	Quebec
Haven House	Listuguj	Quebec
Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter	Lennox Island First Nation	Prince Edward Island
Red Cedars Women's Shelter	Tyendinaga	Ontario

## COHORT 8

Agape House-Eastman Crisis Centre Inc.	Steinbach	Manitoba
Genesis house	Rural Municipality of Stanley	Manitoba
Nova House	Interlake (Selkirk & Eastman)	Manitoba
Moose Jaw Women's Transition Association Inc	Moose Jaw	Saskatchewan
Lloydminster Interval Home Society	Lloydminster	Alberta
Safe Haven Women's Shelter Society	Taber	Alberta



## COHORT 9

Hope Haven	Lac La Biche	Alberta
Wellspring Family Resource & Crisis Centre	Town of Whitecourt	Alberta
Mattawa Women's Resource Centre	Mattawa	Ontario
Manitoulin Family Resources - Haven House	Central Manitoulin	Ontario
Northern Haven Support Society	Slave Lake	Alberta

## COHORT 10

Camrose Women's Shelter	Camrose	Alberta
Naomi's Family Resource Centre	Winchester	Ontario
My Friend's House	Collingwood Corner	Ontario
Maplegate	Elliot Lake	Ontario

## COHORT 11

Due to scheduling and staffing challenges for participating organizations, this cohort was deferred and participants integrated into other cohorts at a later date

## COHORT 12

Mountain Rose Women's Shelter Association	Rocky Mountain House	Alberta
Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre	Cold Lake	Alberta
Crossroads Resource Centre & Women's Shelter	Fairview	Alberta

## COHORT 13

Juniper House	Town of Yarmouth	Nova Scotia
O'Shaughnessy House	Carbonear	Newfoundland and Labrador
Leeside Society	Inverness County	Nova Scotia
Cornerstone Family Violence Prevention Centre	Northumberland County	Ontario
Sandgate Women's Shelter of York Region Inc.	Sutton	Ontario





## COHORT 14

Family Support Centre	Hay River	Northwest Territories
Inuvik Transition House Society	Inuvik	Northwest Territories
Kaushee's Place/ Betty's Haven	Whitehorse	Yukon
Nain Transition House inc.	Nain	Newfoundland and Labrador
Selma Onalik Safe House	Hopedale	Newfoundland and Labrador

## COHORT 15

YTC Project Safe Haven	Yorkton	Saskatchewan
Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centre	Millbrook	Nova Scotia
Nukum Munik Shelter	Sheshathiu	Newfoundland and Labrador
Waskoosis Safe Shelter	Meadow Lake	Saskatchewan
Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre	Cold Lake	Alberta

## COHORT 16

Anishnaabe Kwewag Gamig, Inc.	Alnwick/Haldimand	Ontario
Piwapan Women's Centre	La Ronge	Saskatchewan
Waycobah Mikmaw Family Healing Centre	Waycobah First Nation	Nova Scotia
Gignoo Transition House Inc.	Fredericton	New Brunswick
YWCA NWT	Yellowknife	Northwest Territories
Help & Hope for Families	Watson lake	Yukon
First Step Women's Shelter	Sioux Lookout	Ontario

## COHORT 17

Cape Breton Transition House	Sydney	Nova Scotia
South Shore Transition House Association (Harbour House)	Lunenburg and Queens County	Nova Scotia
Second Stage Safe Haven	Saint John	New Brunswick
Liberty Lane Inc.	Fredericton	New Brunswick
Halifax Transition House Association	Dartmouth	Nova Scotia



## COHORT 18

Paula's Place	Shediac	New Brunswick
La Maison	Toronto	Ontario
L'Escale de l'Estrie	Sherbrooke	Quebec
Le FAR(Famille Accueil Référence) 1985 inc.	Trois-Rivières	Quebec
Maison Sérénité	Bouctouche	New Brunswick

## COHORT 19

Maison Denise Ruel	Lévis	Quebec
Maison d'hébergement l'Égide	La Prairie	Quebec
Maison Anita-Lebel	Baie-Comeau	Quebec
Maison l'océane	montréal	Quebec
Nouvelle-étape	Montréal Nord	Quebec

## COHORT 20

Maison Halte Secours	Dolbeau-Mistassini	Quebec
La Passe-R-Elle des Hautes-Laurentides	Mont-Laurier	Quebec
Mirépi	Saint-Raymond	Quebec
Havre l'Éclaircie	Saint-Georges	Quebec
La Bouée Régionale	Lac-Mégantic	Quebec
Alternative pour Elles	Rouyn-Noranda	Quebec
L'Avenue d'Ariane	St-Jérôme	Quebec
maison d'accueil La Traverse	Joliette	Quebec

## COHORT 21

Maison Libère-Elles	Chelsea	Quebec
Le Centre Louise-Amélie	Sainte-Anne-des-Monts	Quebec
Maison d'hébergement l'Aquarelle	Chibougamau	Quebec
La Gigogne	Matane	Quebec
Maison d'Hébergement Le Rivage de La Baie	La Baie	Quebec
La Séjournelle	Shawinigan	Quebec
Maison Mary-Grace	Maria	Quebec



## COHORT 22

Jessie's House	Town of Morinville and Sturgeon County	Alberta
Rowan House Emergency Shelter	High River	Alberta
YWCA Westman Women's Shelter	Brandon	Manitoba
Women's Safe Haven & Resource Services Inc	Flin Flon	Manitoba

## COHORT 23

Imani's place	Simcoe county	Ontario
Esprit Place Family Resource Centre	Parry Sound	Ontario
Family Transition Place	Orangeville	Ontario
Interval House	Napanee	Ontario

## COHORT 24

Pavilion Women's Centre	Timiskaming Shores / Haileybury	Ontario
Faye Peterson House	Thunder Bay	Ontario
H.E.R. Place Women's Shelter / Timmins & Area Women in Crisis	Timmins	Ontario
PRRWS	Peace River	Alberta
Odyssey House	County of Grande Prairie No.1	Alberta
NEOSS Safe Shelter	Melfort	Saskatchewan

## COHORT 25

The Brenda Strafford Foundation, Heart Home Network	Calgary	Alberta
Leeds and Grenville Interval House	Brockville, Leeds and Grenville Counties	Ontario
Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services	Brantford/Brant County	Ontario
Herizon House	Durham Region	Ontario
Huron Transition Homes/Rosewood Shelter	Midland/Simcoe County	Ontario
Huron Women's Shelter, Second Stage Housing and Counselling Services	Goderich	Ontario
Crisis Centre North Bay	Nipissing	Ontario



## COHORT 26

Jonduh Wuts'uh House Mackenzie Counselling Services	Mackenzie	British Columbia
Fort Nelson Women's Transition House	Fort Nelson	British Columbia
Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society	Revelstoke	British Columbia
My Sister's Place	Prince George	British Columbia
Cape Breton Transition House	Cape Breton	Nova Scotia

## COHORT 27

SOWINS Transition House	Penticton	British Columbia
Spirit Way Second Stage Transitional Housing Programs	Vancouver	British Columbia
Rose Harbour	Campbell River	British Columbia
Amata Transition House Society	Quesnel	British Columbia
Salt Spring Island Transition House	Salt Spring Island	British Columbia
Agape House-Eastman Crisis Centre Inc.	Steinbach	Manitoba
Safe Haven Women's Shelter Society	Taber	Alberta
Halifax Transition House Association	Dartmouth	Nova Scotia

## COHORT 28

Tammaaqvik Women's Shelter - Kugaaruk	Kugaaruk	Nunavut
Qimaavik Women's Shelter	Iqaluit	Nunavut
Arnat Qimavik Women's Shelter	Cambridge Bay	Nunavut
Kataujaq Society Safe Shelter	Rankin Inlet	Nunavut

## COHORT 29

Tammaaqvik Women's Shelter - Kugaaruk	Kugaaruk	Nunavut
Qimaavik Women's Shelter	Iqaluit	Nunavut
Arnat Qimavik Women's Shelter	Cambridge Bay	Nunavut
Kataujaq Society Safe Shelter	Rankin Inlet	Nunavut
Pond Inlet Women's Shelter	Pond Inlet	Nunavut
Crisis Intervention Centre	Kugluktuk	Nunavut



## APPENDIX B – BC AGENCIES PROVIDING MENTORS

### PEACE for Canadian Children and Youth

Agency	Community	BCSTH Region
Comox Valley Transition Society	Courtenay	1 Vancouver Island
Elkford Women's Task Force	Elkford	4 Kootenays
Howe Sound Women's Centre	Sea to Sky Corridor	2 Lower Mainland
Sunshine Coast Community Services Society	Sechelt	2 Lower Mainland
Former PEACE Counsellor	Quebec	N/A
SAFE Society	Salmon Arm	5 Okanagan
PG & District E Fry Society	Prince George	7 Northern BC
Canadian Mental Health Association	Cranbrook	4 Kootenays
Cariboo Friendship Society	Williams Lake	6 Cariboo
Phoenix TH Society	Prince George	7 Northern BC
Former PEACE Counsellor	Lantzville	1 Vancouver Island
Carrier Sekani Family Services	Prince George Region	7 Northern BC
Ishtar Women's Resource Society	Langley	3 Fraser Valley
Robson Valley Community Services	Robson Valley	6 Cariboo
Ann Davis Transition Society	Chilliwack	3 Fraser Valley
Northern Society for Domestic Peace	Smithers	7 Northern BC
Options Services to Community Society	Surrey	2 Lower Mainland
Tamitik Status of Women	Kitimat	7 Northern BC
Kamloops YMCA YWCA	Kamloops	5 Okanagan