

Fall 2021

VICTORIA WOMEN'S
**Transition
House**
SOCIETY

Update From the Deputy Director

The last year-and-a-half has been a time unlike any other. Although many folks now have their double vaccinations and may feel more confident being out and about, even with COVID-19 restrictions lifting, Victoria Women's Transition House programs and services continue to operate in a cautious and safe manner, considerate of our clients and our colleagues.

The pandemic forced many organizations to make quick changes in order to continue to operate safely, and VWTH was no different. As an essential service, we remained open and operational and, with funder and donor support, we added a second shelter location, increasing our capacity to address an expanded client need.

With health and safety protocols in place, our primary objective was to continue to support women and children impacted by violence and abuse and help them through their individual traumas, at a time of great uncertainty. Our support was in-person with masks and physical distancing, over the phone and through a new digital counselling platform.

This past year, a tremendous number of clients came forward, many with complex needs and challenging

personal circumstances. Intimate partner violence and abuse cases soared; the abuse more prevalent and the outcomes, more violent. Unfortunately, this trend continues.



In my role overseeing all VWTH programs and services and throughout my 35+ years with the organization, I know that we have overcome many tough challenges: blizzards, power failures, long waitlists for counselling, funding cuts, broken appliances (a fridge in summer; a stove in winter), staff shortages etc. But never have I experienced changes that resulted in so much pressure on our VWTH staff.

I would like to thank all the VWTH counselling, shelter and support staff who faced front-line challenges, exhaustive workloads, long hours including nights and weekends, persistent ringing Crisis Line telephones and complex client needs. You have all accepted these challenges with courage and grace.

Thank you for your dedication, your commitment and your generosity of spirit in support of women and children confronting intimate partner violence and abuse.

Parm Kroad, Deputy Director

Donor Insight

"I used to teach at a local High School and a group that I sponsored raised money for your charity [VWTH] for a few years. One day, a boy in my Home Room saw something with your charity's name on it on my desk. He smiled and said that he and his mom stayed [at the Shelter] for a while when he was very young. I could picture him as a young boy and right away I knew that I would continue to support your work.

Thank you all for the wonderful services that you provide. The young man turned out very well and VWTH was a part of the community that raised him."

Crisis and Information Line
250.385.6611

Community Office
Suite 100 3060 Cedar Hill Road
Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

 250.592.2927

 info@vwth.bc.ca

 transitionhouse.net

 @VWTHS

  @Victoriawth

Charitable No. 10817 3501 RR0001

Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH) collaborates, advocates and educates to address and prevent intimate partner violence and abuse of women and children through supportive shelter, housing, counselling and other community-based services.

Supporting Women Through Food Security

At VWTH, an important aspect of our services is ensuring food security for our clients through our food program.

Residents at our housing and Shelter locations always have access to food supplies and/or pre-cooked meals, prepared by on-site staff or delivered by volunteers.

Pre-COVID, residents at each respective site came together a few times a year to enjoy BBQs and partake in festive holiday meals.

As safety guidelines continue to change, each site plans to restart community celebrations.

“Special event communal meals are always well attended



and provide much-needed social connection,” shared one of our third stage transitional housing coordinators.

Community organizations are essential to enriching the residents’ food choices with a variety of food contributions. Saanich Baptist Church drops off donations of COBS Bread; Soup Sisters delivers fresh cooked soups; and Gatton Farms donates fresh produce through the summer and fall months. Produce is placed in communal fridges for residents to access as they need. “The women love the fresh produce,” shared the coordinator. “Living on a limited

income, fresh fruits and vegetables can be expensive—almost unaffordable. **The availability of fresh produce helps our women with their budgets, meal plans and stretching their food dollars.”**

As well, Victoria Women’s Transition House is excited to welcome a Food Security Project Assistant. This new staff member is integral to assisting with the food program. They will order, organize, coordinate and deliver food to all residents.

Transition House is grateful for all the generous food donations and supports of our food program. If you are interested in donating fresh goods or catering celebratory meals, please contact our Community Office at **250.592.2927**. Thank you.

STRENGTH: Resilience & Reflection for Senior Women

Our new Older Women’s STRENGTH group recently completed its first eight-week session. This lively group focused on health and wellness through weekly sessions and covered topics including self-care, goal setting, legal literacy, healthy aging, boundary-setting and communication. A support worker who facilitated the group shared her insight.

“Due to the COVID-19 guidelines, the STRENGTH group was our first opportunity since last year to meet with Older Women’s Program clients in person. **Sharing space, sitting in a circle of women, and connecting with vulnerability and compassion,**

was positive and healing for so many”.

With safety protocols in place, each group session started with a land acknowledgement, grounding exercise and check-in and was followed by a speaker presentation or discussion, activity and material pertinent to that week’s topic.

The session hosted several local guest speakers including a heart health advocate and heart attack survivor; naturopathic doctor; and VWTH’s family law advocate.



Reflecting on the session, one participant shared her thoughts.

“Having connections with other women is so important for me... I have made new friends that I can call...and [I] feel loved.”

The next STRENGTH session will run from September to October, 2021. For more information, readers can connect with Cassidy at **250.592.2927 ext. 223** or email **info@vwth.bc.ca**

Territory Acknowledgement

It is with much respect to the Lkwungen and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples of the WSÁNEĆ, Esquimalt, and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories the Victoria Women’s Transition House Society is located, that we make this acknowledgment with the expressed shared hope to live in communities free of intimate partner violence.



Youth Empowerment Through Nature

Each year, VWTH offers a popular spring and summer PEACE camp program for children and youth who have witnessed abuse in the home. Since the pandemic, the camp program has been adapted from a cohort-based group to individual child or child and sibling or parent/caregiver sessions. Adjusting this camp format enabled PEACE staff to spend more time with each child and to see and support more children and families through the camp periods.



provided access to a creative Sea Glass Jewelry workshop.

A highlight from summer camp was Zip Line Day, where PEACE counsellors supported four different mother/caregiver and child groups, building connection, trust and celebrating, with exhilaration, the accomplishment of overcoming fear and uncertainty and completing the zip line adventure.

New this year, campers and their parents/caregivers spent a day with PEACE counselling staff at the beautiful Power To Be campus at Prospect Lake. Power To Be creates access to nature for youth and families living with cognitive, physical, financial and social barriers. VWTH PEACE campers and their

families enjoyed the outdoors and participated in ecotherapy-focused group activities that built trust through blindfold walks and engaged the sensory system through touch, smell and sound.

Power To Be's commitment to supporting participants of all abilities specifically helped one camper's parent with mobility challenges. No longer on the sidelines, the parent was thrilled to fully participate in all activities alongside their child—an experience that was extremely impactful for that family and provided an opportunity for connection and healing.



Orange Shirt Day

Orange Shirt Day is commemorated on September 30th to witness and honour the healing journey of the survivors of residential schools and their families. As we reflect on the recent discoveries of unmarked graves that have devastated communities and brought further trauma for survivors and their families, VWTH continues its commitment to raise awareness,

empathize with the ongoing intergenerational trauma Indigenous communities face and play our part in the process of reconciliation. This year, Transition House staff will show solidarity by supporting the "Every Child Matters" campaign and wear Orange Shirt Day t-shirts.

Visit orangeshirtday.org to learn more and order shirts, buttons and pins.

Painted Pears and A Pear Affair



Join us for a unique art auction fundraiser and reception featuring The Painted Pears. Award-winning local artist, Marion Evamy, has gathered 29 Victoria and Calgary-based artists to paint individual, life-sized concrete pears to then be auctioned, with all proceeds going to VWTH.

Online bidding opens September 15th and closes October 2nd at 3pm. The auction event will culminate with A Pear Affair on Saturday, October 2nd, 2-4pm. This is a hosted, limited ticket reception at the oceanfront home and gallery of Red Art Gallery owners Marion Evamy and Bobb Hamilton.

For more information, please consult the Red Art Gallery website at redartgallery.ca

Wills and Bequests

Victoria Women's Transition House greatly appreciates the thoughtfulness and generosity of folks who include our organization in their will and estate planning, helping us to continue to support women and children impacted by violence and abuse. If you are considering leaving a gift to Transition House and it is helpful, VWTH is happy to provide sample wording for relevant documents and work with you to develop a plan that you can review with your professional advisors.

Have you already arranged to support Transition House? Please let us know so that we can thank you and ensure that we can fulfill your wishes. Contact Susan Howard, Development and Communications Director at susanh@vwth.bc.ca or 250.592.2927 ext. 210

With Our Thanks

Thank you to the **Canadian Women's Foundation** for funding support of Stopping the Violence Women's Counselling and to the **First West Foundation** for their contribution to the Violence is Preventable (VIP) youth workshops. Our thanks to the **CRD Arts Commission's** Idea grant for "Healing Through the Arts: Creativity and Resilience for Older Women" and to the **District of Oak Bay** for supporting "Turning the Tide: A Program for Senior Women". Thank you to the **Times Colonist Christmas Fund** for support of the Spousal Assault Victim Support Program, and the **Community Recovery Program** at **Victoria Foundation** for support of the Family Legal Advocacy project. Many thanks to **Peninsula Co-op, Norgaard Foundation,**



Rotary Victoria-Harbourside and **CFAX Santa's Anonymous Society** for supporting our PEACE children's spring and summer camps. Our heartfelt thanks to Kim Potash and the **Barbara and Philip Potash Foundation.**

A big bundle of thanks to **Slegg Building Materials** for their generous gift-in-kind, and to **Rook & Rose Floral Design Boutique** (pictured) for donating sales from their stunning Designer's Choice floral arrangements throughout June. Thank you also to **Lifestyle Markets** for their kind donation of makeup products for the Emergency Shelter and third-stage housing residents.

Victoria Women's Transition House is deeply grateful to **the Estate of Nancy Elizabeth Gregson** for her generous bequest.

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, September 21, 2021
2:00pm-3:30pm

Location: Zoom Video Conference

To register, email Laura at laurar@vwth.bc.ca

Guest Speaker: Victoria Pruden

Victoria Pruden is a member of the Victoria Women's Transition House Indigenous Advisory Circle, Director of Operations of the Women of the Métis Nation, past Chair of the Métis Women of BC and Métis Nation British Columbia Director and former long-time Executive Director of Bridges for Women.



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October Harvest Moon – Victoria Goddess Run

Lily and her little dog, Dandelion (pictured), are Victoria Women's Transition House Charity Champions and will be participating in the October Harvest Moon Victoria Goddess Run.

Hi everyone, my name is Lily and my dog Dandelion and I are participating in the Victoria Goddess Run. We are excited to be Charity Champions for Victoria Women's Transition House and hope that we can raise lots of funds to support the shelter and other Transition House programs for women and children.

Dandy is my best pal. She's a rescue dog from California and came to me four years ago. She's a sweet little dog and we love our walks through



Cook Street Village, where I live and work, along Dallas Road and through Beacon Hill Park. We enjoy the beach, the patio restaurants in our neighbourhood and visiting all our two and four-legged friends.

For the Harvest Moon Run, Dandelion and I will be dressing up in fabulous costumes, TBC (to be created!) We will start and end our 5km from the Paws On Cook pet store in Fairfield. I'm not sure if Dandelion and I will be walking or running— maybe a combination of both. Watch for us on Saturday, October 30th.

Although I have no direct experience with VWTH, I am compassionate towards the women who get support there. My journey is different but

similar and I know the importance of a supportive community with resources that can help a woman move forward in her life.

Thank you, Lily and Dandelion! To support Lily and Dandelion's Harvest Moon run/walk, go to tinyurl.com/y7ptjzpm. All donors will receive a tax receipt with our thanks.



The October Harvest Moon Run/Walk is a virtual Victoria Goddess event with all donations directed to VWTH, programs and services to support women and children fleeing intimate partner violence and abuse. To register, visit goddessrun.ca