



Community Rallies for Prevention Following IPV Death

Trigger Warning: The tragic death of Laura Gover in her Saanich home on January 5 from alleged intimate partner violence (IPV) has deeply shaken our community and underscores the pressing reality of gender-based violence in our society. At Victoria Women's Transition House, we mourn this devastating loss and stand in solidarity with Laura's loved ones and all those affected. This tragedy represents far more than a single loss – it is a stark reminder that gender-based violence continues to claim lives in our community. Despite increased awareness and prevention efforts, individuals continue to face life-threatening abuse within their homes and relationships. This fatality reflects systemic gaps in protection, intervention, and accountability.

On January 21, Victoria Women's Transition House stood alongside community and anti-violence organizations at the Victoria Courthouse to honour the life of Laura Gover, and to call for urgent action in response to alleged intimate partner violence that resulted in her passing.

The media conference and community rally brought together organizations, advocates, and community members united by a shared commitment to prevention, accountability, and survivor safety. The gathering was both a moment of mourning and a powerful demonstration of collective determination.

Speakers honoured Laura's life and expressed the devastating impact of gender-based violence on children,



families, and communities, while emphasizing that this loss must not be met with silence.

Community partners spoke clearly about intimate partner violence as a patterned and preventable public safety issue, not a private tragedy. Drawing on research and frontline experience, speakers highlighted that warning signs are often visible before violence escalates, particularly during periods of separation.

The message was consistent and urgent: prevention requires coordinated system responses, meaningful risk assessment, enforcement of protection orders, and adequate resources to act when risk is known.

Victoria Women's Transition House reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to ensuring survivors have access to safe, supportive services; advocating for stronger protections and sustainable funding; preventing violence through education and community engagement; and working toward systems that respond effectively before lives are lost. VWTH Executive Director Bahar Dehnadi said, "We gather here today to reaffirm to victims and their families that they

deserve better. They deserve safety and systems that believe them and act swiftly to protect them. And we will not stop fighting for that."

The strong turnout and shared voices reflected a community unwilling to

accept the status quo. In standing together, organizations and supporters demonstrated that grief can be transformed into action, and that collective advocacy is essential to creating lasting change.

VWTH continues to support women and

children experiencing or at risk of violence through our 24/7 crisis line, emergency transition house, second stage housing, counselling, children and youth programs, homelessness prevention initiatives, groups, and community education.

We extend our deepest condolences to Laura's family, friends, students, and loved ones, and we hold space for the profound grief felt across our community.

If you or someone you know is experiencing intimate partner violence, support is available 24/7 through the VWTH Crisis Line at 250-385-6611. No one should face violence alone.



VWTH Executive Director
Bahar Dehnadi



VWTH 50+ Groups Support Wellness and Connection

Intimate partner violence survivors aged 50+ face experiences and barriers to safety that are often very different from those of younger women. Many older survivors have lived with abuse for decades, shaping trauma responses, coping strategies, and emotional attachments that require age- and trauma-specific support.

Older women may also depend on an abusive partner or adult child for housing, income, transportation, or care, that makes leaving a serious health and survival risk, not simply a change in household. Ageism, combined with deeply ingrained gender norms about silence and endurance, can increase shame and delay disclosure for many years.

In addition to counselling, Victoria Women's Transition House offers several programs for older women that are supportive, creative, and wellness-focused opportunities for women over the age of 50 who have been impacted by intimate partner violence. These groups are rooted in connection, empowerment, and community – and one standout program,

Turning the Tide:

Creative Wellness for 50+, shows just how art and expression can help participants explore identity, resilience, and healing.

Turning the Tide is an 8-week, arts-based program that invites participants to explore personal stories, inner worlds, and creative expression. Through art-making and shared discussion, this group supports empowerment and self-discovery with all supplies provided at no charge. It's designed around the belief that creative expression can be a powerful pathway to connection and self-reflection, helping women cultivate confidence and community in a supportive environment. The next group is Thursdays from **February 5 to March 26, 2026, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm** (location to be determined). The program is open to self-identified women, including cisgender and transgender women, as well as nonbinary individuals who identify within the women's community.

STRIDE: Active Living for 50+ is a drop-in wellness program that encourages movement and social connection through activities like yoga, stretching, walking, and outdoor classes. These sessions are playful, inclusive, and designed to boost both physical health and mental wellness.

For deeper personal growth, the **STRENGTH: Resilience and Reflection for 50+** group offers a 10-week journey into resilience, well-being, and self-discovery through interactive workshops and discussions. Other



group options include mixed-media art classes and skill-building sessions, all aimed at fostering connection, reducing isolation, and nurturing joy and health as women rebuild their lives.

Across these programs, VWTH creates safe, welcoming spaces where women can gather, support one another, and engage in meaningful activities that support healing, wellness, and connection. For many participants, these groups are not just programs, they are places of community, strength, and new beginnings.

Our 50+ programs are designed to meet these realities with compassion, safety, and understanding, affirming that it is never too late to seek support, dignity, and choice.

For more information on 50+ groups, contact Lina at linal@vwth.bc.ca.

VWTH thanks the **Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust** for generous support of *Turning the Tide*, and individual donors and other community supporters for funding STRIDE and STRENGTH. Thank you all for the support!

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.

Victoria Goddess Run Sunday, March 8



Victoria Women's Transition House is proud to be one of the charity partners of the 15th annual Victoria Goddess Run taking place on International Women's Day, **Sunday, March 8 at Beaver/Elk Lake**.

What a wonderful way to celebrate being a strong woman by participating in the Goddess Run!

If you're looking to set a fitness goal this year, the 5K or 10K walk or run along this lake-side trail route may be a perfect fit for you. It's an accessible goal for anyone.

Goddess Run registration and fundraising is now underway. Please lace up those runners today, join us at this fun, inspiring event, and consider making a donation in support of Victoria Women's Transition House today!

Visit www.goddessrun.ca to register and to donate now.

Save the Date: VWTH's 3rd Annual Glow Gala

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Victoria Women's Transition House Society's 3rd Annual **Glow Gala** is returning on **Saturday, May 2**, and we can't wait to welcome you for an unforgettable evening in support of women and children impacted by intimate partner violence.

Taking place at the beautiful **Delta Victoria Ocean Pointe Resort**, the Glow Gala is a celebration of elegance, creativity, and community. More importantly, it is a powerful opportunity to come together in solidarity for survivors, honour their courage and resilience, and raise vital funds that support safety, healing, and prevention programs for those impacted by gender-based violence across our community.

The Glow Gala has quickly become one of VWTH's most meaningful annual events, bringing together supporters, partners, and advocates who believe that everyone deserves to live free



from violence. Guests can expect a thoughtfully curated evening filled with connection, inspiration, and purpose, all while helping ensure that women and children have access to life-saving services when they need them most.

Proceeds from the Glow Gala directly support VWTH programs, including emergency shelter, housing, counselling, children and youth services, and violence prevention initiatives.

For more information on Glow Gala tickets, table purchases (10 seats) and sponsorship opportunities, please visit transitionhouse.net/glow-gala or contact Susan Howard – susanh@vwth.bc.ca

Join us for an evening that shines a light on resilience, community, and hope – and helps build a safer future for women and children.



Territory Acknowledgement

It is with much respect to the Lekwungen and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples of the **W̱SÁNEĆ**, 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.

Fashion Splash: Saturday, February 21

Nomad Market Events is hosting Victoria's premier local designer fashion event, the 12th annual **Fashion Splash**, at the **Victoria Scottish Community Centre**, on **Saturday, February 21**. The event features a runway-style fashion show showcasing the talented local fashion industry here on Vancouver Island.



Victoria Women's Transition House is excited and honoured to be the beneficiary of the Fashion Splash silent and online auction proceeds.

Thank You!

Thank you to all who responded to our Winter Fundraising Campaign. Together, your contributions will help us continue to support our women and client families, and our programs and services. Rising to the challenge, a generous, anonymous company donated \$10,000 as a December 6th Giving Tuesday match, resulting in donations of over four times that amount within 24-hours: \$41,000, plus the original \$10,000 gift. A tremendous community response! Thank you all.



Community support continued with donations of so many gifts-in-kind. From holiday ornaments, trees and other decor to help deck the halls at all our locations; to 146 pairs of cozy jammies from **La Vie en Rose Langford** and **Bikini Village Mayfair Centre**; to thoughtful care bags from the **Victoria Yacht Club and friends** and **PowerWest Athletics and friends**; to handmade crocheted blankets and quilts for clients at our Emergency Transition House; to comforting soups



created by **Claremont Secondary** students; to a generous donation from **Sapphire Day Spa** and their customers; and countless more in-person donations of so many things to support our clients – all of which have helped bring comfort, dignity, and care to the women and children we support.

Special thanks to **Thrifty Foods Cloverdale** for their ongoing support during this holiday season, and beyond. Their generous food donation meant that both our Emergency Transition House and 50+ Second Stage enjoyed special holiday meals with all the fixings. Over 90 brand-new toys from their annual Toy Drive brought joy and comfort to children across all our programs. And, a donation of 37x \$100 Thrifty Foods gift cards helped families choose essentials or special treats for their loved ones.



This holiday season, VWTH's **Holiday Hampers** helped bring care, dignity, and practical support to **223 women and 257 children** across our programs. Made possible by the generosity of **140 donors** and the dedication of our incredible volunteers, these hampers offered families a bit of relief and warmth during a time that can be especially challenging. We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time (like our dedicated volunteers, pictured), resources, and kindness to help make the holidays a little brighter for women and children in our community.

And thanks to our friends at **Dance Victoria** and **The Victoria Symphony** for the donation of tickets to The

Nutcracker ballet, with the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers, and to the Victoria Symphony Christmas Pops concert. Dozens of VWTH clients and their families enjoyed meaningful moments of joy and connection at these exciting performances.

These are just a few highlights of the hundreds of donations we received leading up the Holidays. Thank you all for warming many hearts through your caring generosity.

Production of this newsletter was generously discounted by:



**YES! I wish to support
Victoria Women's Transition House**

- Donate using this QR Code
- Donate via our website <https://www.transitionhouse.net/donatenow/>
- Donate over the phone with a credit card by calling our Community Office, Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm: **250-592-2927**
- Donate by mail: send us a cheque with your contact details to:

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VICTORIA WOMEN'S
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SOCIETY

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