

# Spring 2021

VICTORIA WOMEN'S

Transition  
House  
SOCIETY



## Welcome to Spring

Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH) wants to wish you a warm and sunny spring and thank you for all of your support during a very difficult time. Women and their children impacted by intimate partner violence and abuse, including older women, can still access safe Emergency Shelter, counselling and support at VWTH throughout the pandemic. As an essential service, we remain open, with two Shelter locations and strict COVID-19 protocols in place.

If you or someone you know needs help, don't delay. Call our 24-hour Crisis and Information Line at **250.385.6611**.

## What My Mother Didn't Tell Me: Helping to Break the Intergenerational Cycle of Violence

As Mother's Day approaches, many of us will start to think about how we will honour the mothers and mother-like figures who have supported us in our lives. While some may reflect on healthy family relationships and memories of safe and enriching upbringings, for others, this may be a reminder of painful experiences.



As a young teenager, Annie\* once witnessed her uncle slap her aunt. She remembers feeling powerless and scared. No one told Annie that abuse was unacceptable. Violence and abuse was something all of her aunts and mother were surviving. As a female, Annie often wondered if she would have to accept abuse too.

Before age 15, one in ten Canadians will witness violence in the home. Children who witness abuse have a higher risk of emulating abuse later in life—either as victims or abusers.

So what can be done to help break the cycle of intergenerational violence, and how can we empower generations to raise awareness and stand against the abuse we may experience, hear about or witness as children, youth, and adults?

"For years, my mother endured abuse in her relationships. Recently, with continued support and encouragement from trusted loved ones, she decided to reach out to local community supports," shared Annie. **"With the help of a safety plan, she was able to leave her abusive partner, overcome her trauma, heal and move forward. In so many ways, this has helped me and my siblings, too."**

Talking about violence and abuse in a judgement-free way can help to erode the stigma that often surrounds these topics. Although it may be difficult, normalizing discussion about abuse can also help reduce the isolation people in abusive relationships may experience. Not talking about abuse fuels the shame survivors may feel. Abuse is never the survivors' fault.

Sharing stories of surviving and escaping abuse can also help people recognize signs of abusive behaviour and encourage children and women to speak to loved ones and ask for help. This can also help survivors learn about resources and

access community-based services. Organizations like VWTH offer trauma-informed counselling services that help survivors process their experiences and emotions and understand personal rights to safety.

**"Growing up, the women in my life didn't tell me that abuse was unacceptable. Perhaps because they weren't told that either. But now we know,"** reflected Annie. As mothers and mother-like figures, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, friends, mentors, role models and supportive groups of people, having difficult conversations and supporting and empowering each other will help us address and break the cycle of intergenerational violence and abuse—for ourselves and future generations.

\* Name of interviewee has been changed for confidentiality

### 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.



# Community Education: Presentations on Older Adult Abuse and Neglect

Since the pandemic, a number of our community education initiatives have adjusted in their service delivery, including our "Older Adult Abuse and Neglect" project, a workshop presentation that has moved from in-person to a digital format.

This popular workshop includes information on the different types of abuse, why abusers abuse and the barriers to seeking help. Attendees learn about tools to help identify signs of abuse, community resources and ways to self-protect and safeguard others from financial abuse. We connected with our education coordinator to learn more.

When lockdown occurred, Elders were part of the vulnerable population that almost immediately lost access to community supports. Because our presentation focuses on Elder abuse, our team wanted to ensure we could still connect with that population. So at the beginning of COVID, we moved to an online presentation format.

Despite the pandemic, the virtual presentations have allowed us to share important information and connect with attendees who tell us

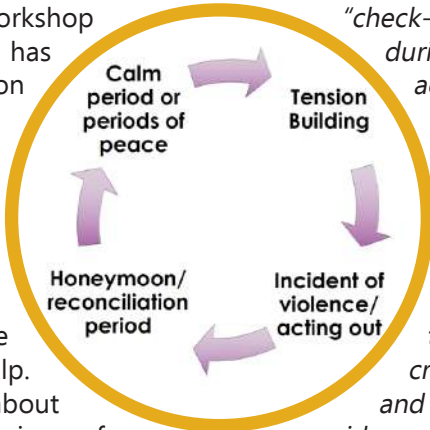
that they find the content informative and helpful, especially the detail on the **cycle of abuse** (pictured). Participants also appreciate the "check-in" time we schedule during the workshop to acknowledge common feelings of anxiety and stress during this difficult time.

Excited by the opportunity to reach more people through technology, we created an Older Abuse and Neglect educational video with Jennifer, a VWTH older women's counsellor and a specialist nurse with years of experience working with senior persons in the community. Visit VWTH's YouTube channel to watch the video.

As other initiatives slowly restart, Transition House looks forward to collaborating with additional community partners and services providers to further raise awareness and provide information regarding intimate partner violence and abuse.

Our thanks to The Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust for funding the Older Adult Abuse and Neglect awareness project.

*Pictured: The Cycle of Abuse, Adapted from Older Adult Abuse and Neglect presentation*



## From Our Clients

"Excellent COVID-19 protocols—I felt safe. I slept better, started to take better care of myself, ate healthier, and lived in peace."

"Thank you all so much for everything you do and the support and information that is shared. I will be forever grateful for this safe home."



## Prevention of Violence Against Women Week

April 11–17, 2021, will commemorate Prevention of Violence Against Women Week. During this week, VWTH will continue to engage with our community to advocate and educate to address and prevent intimate partner violence and abuse. Stay tuned to our social media pages for information and updates.

## 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.



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# National Volunteer Week Spotlight: In Conversation with Marcia

Since 1991, Marcia has been an integral part of the team of front-line workers, offering support to women and their children impacted by violence and abuse. Now preparing for retirement, Marcia shared some of her thoughts on her work at VWTH.

## What was your role at VWTH?

I was a women's counsellor and part of the 24-hour Crisis Line team. I provided extensive training and guidance to the Crisis Line volunteers. A big part of our work was giving support and resources to women in crisis and taking them through a safety plan. I also mentored and supervised Social Work and Counselling and Nursing students at the Shelter.



## What has been most rewarding about working as front-line staff?

Probably seeing people being able to heal and move on. It is quite inspiring how people can come from a bad situation and manage to rebuild and make their lives and their children's lives better. I feel very proud to have been part of helping people make those changes.

It has also been rewarding as a Crisis Line volunteer coordinator to see volunteers blossom. In the beginning, many volunteers were nervous but as time went by, they became more confident and grew into their role. Some of them have gone on to do amazing things to support others in the community by utilizing the skills learned on the Crisis Line.

## What is the Crisis Line volunteer training like?

Over nine weeks, we provide skills-based training that includes learning to support and respond to callers with different issues and concerns. At the end of their training, volunteers complete a shadow shift. Even after

volunteers finish their training, they are never by themselves—staff support is always available.

## What kind of support does the Crisis Line provide?

The Crisis Line provides 24-hour support to anyone calling – a woman in crisis, a concerned family member, friend, colleague, professional etc. Trained volunteers and staff provide information, share community resources or give a referral and walk a woman through a safety plan. If a caller needs our Emergency Shelter services, we conduct a shelter assessment, ask some key questions and make sure we have space. Calls can last anywhere from a few minutes to one hour.

## Any messages for our current and future volunteers and staff?

We can all make a difference. Sometimes volunteers can feel nervous about supporting others but with certain skills and attitudes—by being understanding and compassionate—we can make a huge difference. A single supportive conversation can be a turning point for the individual reaching out.

Our congratulations and sincerest appreciation to Marcia for 29 years of professional dedication to VWTH as an essential front-line worker. We are also grateful for the training and mentorship she provided over the years to practicum students, volunteers and peers.

VWTH's Crisis and Information Line provides judgment-free support for women who are experiencing or have experienced intimate partner violence and abuse. **250.385.6611.**



## National Volunteer Week: Thank you!

April 18–24 is National Volunteer Week and this year's theme is **The Value of One, the Power of Many.**

Volunteers are an important part of Victoria Women's Transition House and the work we do in support of women and children impacted by violence and abuse.

Before the pandemic, volunteers staffed the Crisis and Information Line; cooked and sorted items at the Shelter; ran errands and picked up donations; raked and cleaned the Shelter yard and garden; hosted info tables and assisted at fundraising events; supported our Christmas Hamper program, and so much more. At various points during the pandemic and with health and safety protocols in place, volunteers came back to assist in a limited capacity. But with current COVID-19 restrictions, VWTH temporarily suspended the volunteer program.

In the meantime, VWTH stays connected with volunteers through email and Zoom events and continues to accept new volunteer applications and schedule volunteer training sessions, online.

To learn more about our Volunteer Program, visit **transitionhouse.net**. Questions? Contact our Volunteer Coordinator at **odettel@vwth.bc.ca**.

We look forward to the day when we can gather again and welcome volunteers back to Transition House. Thank you, volunteers!



## With Our Thanks

Thank you to **The Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust** for support of *Turning the Tide: A Program in Oak Bay for Older Women* and *Safe at Home: An Older Women's Outreach Project*, and to **New Horizons for Seniors** for *Strength: Resilience and Reflection for Senior Women*. Our thanks to the **City of Langford** for support of the Violence is Preventable (VIP) program and the **City of Colwood** for support of the Spousal Assault Victim Support Program.

As part of the national LOVE YOU campaign to promote women's health and wellness, our thanks to customers, staff and owners at seven Victoria-area **Shoppers' Drug Mart** stores including Westshore, Hillside Centre, Uptown, Royal Oak, Fort Street, Esquimalt and Saanichton store locations. Thanks to **The Body Shop** Bay Centre and Mayfair Centre for selecting VWTH

as the beneficiary of the Share the Love Self Care promotion during International Women's Week, March 8-14, donating a 200ml body butter for each one purchased. Our thanks again to **Foxglove Flowers** and the community donor for beautiful monthly bouquet donations delivered to our shelter locations; and thank you to the residents of **Berwick House Retirement Community** in Gordon Head for the donation of charming knitted hats and a large basket of goodies for VWTH shelter staff and clients. Lastly, a bundle of thanks to **Lisa Woo** from **Discovery Toys** for 52 beautiful Easter baskets filled with books, toys and treats for VWTH children and youth.

Victoria Women's Transition House is deeply grateful to the Estate of **Brenda Morton** for her generous bequest.



## VWTH Charity Champion: Carolyn

Here is Carolyn, our VWTH staff Charity Champion!

*Hi there. I am the Payroll and Benefits Coordinator with VWTH and have been with the organization for almost two years. I started running in 2019 after experiencing an event in my life that affected me negatively. I was out for a walk one day and had so much anger in me that I just took off running. That was the start of my journey. My first race was the Sarah Beckett run that I completed with my best friend who is a police officer. In total, I have completed six Goddess Runs.*



*My running goal is usually to improve my running time. I would love to get myself down to around 25 minutes for a 5km. The last Run I completed in 27 minutes, 27 seconds. When I run, nothing else matters. I have found it to be the best form of therapy. Generally, I like to run alone. It gives me that time just for myself. I've tried running with*

*my dog, but she's still a puppy, a bit out of control and runs really fast. I hope by next year she will be able to be my running buddy.*

*My favourite running location is along Dallas Road and this is where I'll be running for the Victoria Goddess Run on June 12. The view is amazing and the air is refreshing from the water. I never thought I would be a runner, and now I am. This year I plan to compete in all the Goddess Runs, the TC10k and the Royal Victoria Half Marathon. Yup. I love running!*

Thank you Carolyn and thank you, Victoria Goddess Run!

If you wish to support Carolyn's run for VWTH, please visit [transitionhouse.net/events/goddessrun21](https://www.transitionhouse.net/events/goddessrun21).

For more information and to register for the Victoria Goddess Run, go to [goddessrun.ca](https://www.goddessrun.ca).



## Why I Give

"As a fortunate woman, I am very aware how differently my life could have turned out, and I want to help women and children in crisis."

- Ellie Grogan, Sidney, BC



## Victoria Goddess Run

This year, VWTH returns as the charity of choice for all three Victoria Goddess Runs, offered virtually in June, October and December. Participants can add a tax-deductible donation to their registration, set-up a donation page or run and fundraise as a team. All donations help to support VWTH and the women and children we serve.

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