

Winter 2017

VICTORIA WOMEN'S
Transition
 **House**
SOCIETY

Laurel's Story

Laurel is a 78-year-old woman from Saskatchewan who came to Victoria to visit with family. When she arrived, she told her family about the difficulties she had endured in her marriage of 36 years, and the ongoing abusive behavior of her husband. A family member gave her the number for the Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH) crisis and information line and she was encouraged to call for support. After speaking with one of our counsellors, Laurel decided she needed to stay at the Shelter.

Laurel is Aboriginal and during her time at Transition House, we learned that when she was 14 years-old, she was removed from her family and sent to live with a non-Aboriginal family as an unpaid domestic.

Unhappy in this situation, she left at age 16 to make her own way in the world. She married soon after and had several children. She endured abuse from her husband and eventually left him.

At around age 40, Laurel remarried. During this marriage, she lost touch with her children, as she endured social isolation as well as abuse from her husband. This relationship lasted until she arrived at the Shelter this year. At the Shelter, Laurel began attempts to reconnect with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Laurel transferred from the Shelter to the VWTH Older Women's Program and our third stage housing. When the counsellor brought her into her unit in the housing complex, Laurel became teary. "This is the nicest home I have ever had."

Laurel was very busy in the community during her time in our housing. She was active at Victoria Native Friendship Centre where she volunteered with children. She also kept very busy with teaching contracts, which she had secured with the Federal Government. Laurel has talents as an artist and is skilled in crafts from her Aboriginal background, making deerskin moccasins and traditional felt and skirts.

With a safe home and VWTH supports, Laurel was able to stabilize and explore opportunities.

She has now left our housing to take up a position in a school in Manitoba where she will again be teaching her language.

The VWTH staff were impressed with the courage of this 78-year-old woman who found the emotional and physical strength to leave

her abusive partner and relocate her life. She has now embarked on a new life adventure, motivated by a passion for her culture and her heritage.



Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society, working collaboratively, provides shelter, support, counselling and education to women of all ages, with or without children, so that they can live free from the effects of abuse in intimate relationships. The Society strives to prevent and eliminate abuse through education, advocacy and partnerships.



Donor Spotlight

Recently, we sat down for coffee with VWTH donor, Karen Lindsay.



What is your connection to Victoria Women's Transition House? What interests you the most about our agency?

I am a simple donor, and have been since 1994. I admire greatly the levels of safety, support, training and care you provide women and children who have arrived at the shelter and are in need of assistance.

Remembering the very first time you made a gift to VWTH, what prompted you to make that donation? Why is it important to you to continue your support over the years?

My mother died in September 1993. It was my sister's suggestion that we donate her clothes and household goods to a women's shelter. This felt like a perfect thing to do, as my father had been a violent man and back in the 60's, there were no support for women and children like us. In fact, judgement and shame were heaped upon "broken families", so my mother stayed until he left us.

After the initial donation of my mom's items to another women's organization in Victoria, I wanted to do something on a permanent basis for Victoria women who had the courage to leave abusive partners. The Victoria Women's Transition House was a perfect fit. As to why I keep it up, I believe with all my

heart that when women take a step forward, a step up, the whole culture is lifted. Women may be an easy target to beat with fists, but our hearts and souls are stronger than hate, stronger than rage. Women are fierce and with a little help from others, we become unbeatable.

What words of encouragement would you like to share with our clients?

You have already taken the hardest step, the step out that door. Keep your courage up, and when that fails, lean on someone worthy of your trust. Believe in yourself even when you cannot immediately connect with the people who believe in you. Things get better. You are not alone.

Gift Cards

Donating grocery or pharmacy Gift Cards is another way to help our clients this holiday season. Gift Cards are offered to clients leaving our emergency shelter, to help women and their families purchase groceries, fresh produce and other essentials. So this season, when you're out doing your grocery shopping or Christmas gift buying, please consider adding a gift card to your list as a gift for a Transition House resident.

Gift cards from Fairway Market, Walmart, Thrifty Foods, Shoppers Drug Mart, London Drugs, or other groceries and pharmacies, in increments of \$20 and \$50, are most practical and can be dropped off during regular office hours or mailed to our Community Office, #100-3060 Cedar Hill Road, Victoria, BC V8T 3J5. Please include your name, return address and value of the gift card so we can send you a note of appreciation. *Thank you.*



Reaching Out With Yoga

VWTH is excited to be included as a pilot site for a unique research project - **Reaching Out With Yoga**. Initiated by the BC Society of Transition Houses, this project brings trauma-informed yoga (TIY) to women who have experienced domestic abuse and are accessing transition house or second/third stage housing services in BC. The project will study the impacts of TIY on the health and well-being of these women.

The mindfulness-based, trauma-informed yoga classes will encourage clients to reconnect and feel safe within their bodies, a key in trauma recovery. A sense of social safety will be cultivated by offering yoga in group classes in familiar locations where VWTH clients are already accessing counselling services.

Experienced Victoria Yoga teachers can apply to volunteer and receive specialized training to deliver

trauma-informed group yoga classes to VWTH clients. For more information and to apply to be a TIY instructor, please contact Yoga Outreach at yogaoutreach.com

Reaching Out With Yoga is a collaborative project between the BC Society of Transition Houses, Yoga Outreach and select BC transition houses, including VWTH.

For more information on the VWTH TIY classes, please contact our Community Office, 250-592-2927.

Update: Children Who Witness Abuse

I recently joined the VWTH as a Children's Counsellor at the Shelter and had an opportunity to attend my first BC Society of Transition Houses Annual Training Forum in Richmond, BC, October 25-27 2017.

The Training Forum is an amazing, inspiring, rejuvenating, three-day conference that hosts over 200 BC-based anti-violence workers who support women, children and youth in a variety of capacities.

In addition to helpful training sessions, informative lectures and inspiring key-note speakers, there were opportunities to network with colleagues from other transition houses across the Province, to exchange information and ideas, and to share our successes and our challenges. As well, the conference offered more than 20 workshops on a wide variety of topics.

The workshops I attended focused on conversations regarding **upholding the dignity of mothers and children who have left violence**. One aspect of this conversation was about recognizing the acts of resistance women and children demonstrate when faced with violence.

The session suggested practical ways for workers, like myself, to communicate with children and mothers in a way that promotes dignity and helps repair relationships that may have been harmed by violence and abuse in the home. One thing I took away was a personal challenge to reflect on how I can change the focus of a situation with the language I use. This **language can alter a dynamic** and support mothers to help children to process difficult emotions and regain a sense of connection after disruptive events.



Overall, I felt inspired by the passion of the people who attended and participated at the conference. We all work in this field and share the goal of stopping the cycle of violence. Now that I am back in Victoria, I feel a renewed energy to continue learning and growing in my role as a children's counsellor and supporting so many incredibly strong and resilient women and children.

~ A VWTH Children's Counsellor

Congratulations!

This fall, Victoria resident Rosanna Roach won a 2017 Honda Civic from **Campus Honda** in a contest with **The Zone 91.3** radio station. She also received **\$5,000** to direct to her charity of choice – Victoria Women's Transition House.

Thank you, Rosanna, Campus Honda and The Zone! We are so very appreciative for the support.



VWTH is participating in the BC Children's Hospital **Festival of Trees** – Victoria at The Bay Centre until January 3. Stop by and see our tree, #74, complete with sparkle dusted pinecones, ribbons, birds and butterflies including a collection of inspirational quotes from grateful VWTH clients.

A big thank you to **Bridge Systems** for sponsoring our tree and giving us the opportunity to be part of this festive event.



The VWTH tree-decorating project was spearheaded by VWTH volunteer-extraordinaire, Colleen Irwin, centre, and assisted by VWTH staff Emily, left, and Joanna, right. Thank you, all.

Thank You!

Our sincere thanks to all who participated in and supported **Cherish, October 26th** at the **Oak Bay Beach Hotel**. This sold out fundraising event was a collaborative effort of VWTH and Dance Victoria with proceeds split between the two organizations.

Special thanks to our Lead Sponsor, **Kirsty Thomson** of **Willow Wealth Management** of **Raymond James** and to our amazing Cherish team: **Kari McLay** | Tulipe Noire Boutique, **Donna Andersen-White** | Hughes Clothing, **Dale Olsen** | Outlooks for Men, **John Carreiro** | Carreiro The Studio, **Jody Hollis** | Beautycounter & Living Hollis Style, **Stephanie Macpherson**, **Trina Mendria** | Artsee Eyewear, **DJ Jansom**, **Chris Tang** | Atmos Events, and our emcee **Tess van Straaten**.

We could not have done this event without the support of our Community Champions: Artsee Eyewear; Beautycounter; Best Life by Design-Miriam Byrne; BMO; Bosdet Homes - Hand Crafted Real Estate, Victoria, BC; Bridgehouse Asset Managers; Brown Henderson Melbye; Cardino Shoes; Connor Clark & Lunn Private Capital Ltd; Cooper Union Decor; Cosmedica; Derma Spa; Dicastri Lidstone; Dr. Michael J. Murray (Murray Chiropractic Group with Dr. Ashley Murray & Dr. Mike Hadbavny); Julie Rust - Newport Realty; M.H. Stimpson & Associates; Monk Office; Niche Women's Tours; Robert W. Cameron Law; Russell Investments; Seascape Inn; Smart Dolphins IT Solutions Inc; Style Stick; Tulipe Noire Clothing; Vintage Hot Tubs Pool Patio & Billiards; Young Living - Susan Seale; Western Interior Design Group Ltd.

Thank you also to the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, our **talented dancers/models, volunteers, guests**, and the many **sponsors** and **donors** to our Silent Auction and mystery envelopes.



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

I would like to give a gift of:

☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$_____

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$10



Mail: 100 - 3060 Cedar Hill Road Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

Online: Visit transitionhouse.net and click on Donate

Phone: Call 250-592-2927 to make a credit card donation

☐ Enclosed is my cheque payable to Victoria Women's Transition House

I prefer to use my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ AmEx

Card No: _____ Expiry: ____/____

Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____

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VICTORIA WOMEN'S
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