

Winter 2022



Homelessness Prevention

SUCCESS STORIES FROM A VITAL PROGRAM

Victoria is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Numerous factors combine to create the current local situation where rental housing is in short supply, and out of price for many. Estimates place the number of people experiencing homelessness in the Capital Region at 1,500 with rental vacancy rates as low as 1% and housing prices rising year over year.

The impact on VWTH service users can be significant. Women leaving an abusive relationship may have additional barriers to securing housing. These challenges can include:

- Loss of partner's income
- Inability to work
- Reliance on Income Assistance
- Shortage of affordable options
- Forced to seek market rental housing

This is where the VWTH **Housing Support Program and Homelessness Prevention Program** can make a real difference in a woman's life. With one-to-one support, guidance, resources and trauma-informed outreach

services, the VWTH HPP workers help find solutions to prevent women leaving abusive relationships from becoming homeless, or returning to the relationship because they have nowhere to live. In addition, short-term rent funding support, determined on a client-by-client basis, is available to remove the financial barrier to housing. Funding support can be applied to a woman's rent, deposit, moving or storage costs, utilities etc. This is temporary short-term assistance, on average 3-6 months, and is combined with regular client follow-up for a full 12 months.



Client Success Story

Abbey – navigating school, an expensive-rental market and moving forward

"Abbey" left her abusive partner and stayed at our Shelter before finding her own rental housing. Throughout the difficult transition period, she managed to maintain her full-time studies, as well as part-time employment, but needed short-term rent funding support from our Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) to cover her basic monthly expenses. Along with the five-month funding support, HPP staff also helped her apply for an educational grant, to ensure she could pay her school fees in the coming term. During the summer, Abbey was able to work two jobs and put some money aside for the current school year. She is now back at school, continuing to work part-time, and looking ahead to the next steps in her educational and career paths.



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.

Crisis and Information Line
250.385.6611

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✉ info@vwth.bc.ca

🌐 transitionhouse.net

📘 @VWTHS

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Charitable No. 10817 3501 RR0001



Positive Progress on Second Stage Housing

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW WESTSHORE PROJECT

On November 4th Victoria Women's Transition House and community partners were proud to take part in a special announcement regarding the ground breaking for the new Westshore Transition Housing project. In attendance were Premier John Horgan, MLAs Mitzi Dean and Grace Lore as well as outgoing Mayor of Langford Stew Young.

VWTH partnered with BC Housing to announce this exciting project. The new four-storey building will include a mix of studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom spaces that will serve as affordable housing for women and those who identify as women, and their dependent children, leaving violence. The site will offer two short-term safe home spaces and 48 second-stage homes that will provide accommodation with on-site supports for women and those who identify as women, and their dependent children, leaving violence. The second-stage housing will offer some units for a moderate length stay (up to one year) and others for longer stays (up to two years).

Makenna Rielly, VWTH Executive Director spoke at the event: "We believe that violence and abuse have no place in the family or in society. Thank you to BC Housing for providing this complex to keep women and children safe within the community and to the donors for supporting our programs."



BACKGROUND

On any given day in our community, hundreds of women and their children are living with abuse at home. The requests for services in the Westshore communities have increased with the rapid growth in the area, which has few intimate partner violence services to offer.

In October of 2018, Premier John Horgan officially announced that BC Housing intended to build second stage housing in Langford. The Province, through BC Housing, purchased the land and will provide the Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTHS) with an annual operating subsidy.

Women in intimate partner violence situations may attempt to leave an abusive relationship multiple times; and one of the most common reasons they return to that abusive relationship is the fear of homelessness. What VWTH can offer at this new Westshore location are value added services by providing a one-stop service delivery program. In this complex there will be

- Short-term second stage affordable housing up to one year (higher levels of service)
- Second stage affordable housing up to two years for those involved in the programming
- Counselling and groups for women and children
- Children's programs
- Community partner meeting rooms
- Workshop space for VWTH classes such as Rent Smart, Financial Literacy, Expressive Arts and Life Skills support
- Gathering space for Indigenous women and children to meet with families, elders and other community supports.

We anticipate that the project will be complete to welcome guests by the fall 2024. As with all projects for women and children leaving violence, the address of this project has not been disclosed for safety reasons.





Why She Stays

UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF LEAVING

Studies show that 67% of Canadians know a woman who has been the victim of intimate partner violence. Too often, people assume that abuse will end by leaving and that if a woman stays with an abusive partner she is making a choice to stay.

Victoria Women's Transition House understands that women face often overwhelming challenges in leaving, and that her reasons for staying are numerous and valid.

She may stay because she...

- ***doesn't know the supports available in her community;***
- ***believes she has nowhere to go;***
- ***fears for her life and the lives of her children because he has threatened harm if she leaves;***
- ***could be facing homelessness if she leaves;***
- ***doesn't want her children growing up in poverty or without a father;***
- ***blames herself and has been told the abuse is her fault.***

To help overcome the obstacles facing women who are seeking both safety and lives free from intimate partner violence, VWTH offers specialised support and services. As well as the Emergency Shelter accommodation and 24-hr Crisis and Information Line we have developed programs to address, and work to eliminate, any barriers to women and their children seeking safety.



Client Reflection



To All of the Staff of Harrison Place. A very special thank you for your care and support. After two years of not being able to see my daughter, it is because of your support and the donations of this wonderful community that I was able to provide a lovely Christmas for my family, full of love, happiness and memories. My daughter who is just a beautiful pillar of strength and determination said it was her favourite Christmas ever. You can imagine how much that meant to hear her say that. From my heart to all of yours many, many blessings and happy holidays. Thank you!



Substance Use and Intimate Partner Violence

COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP REQUIRES SKILLED SUPPORT

VWTH Stopping the Violence (STV) counsellors see the complicated relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and substance use. They understand that VWTH clients may have fear in disclosing their substance use, of being judged, and that their substance use will affect custody of their children. Alongside this fear is shame.

For many survivors of intimate partner violence, using drugs and alcohol are a way to cope with the traumatic effects of abuse. Others may be coerced into using by an abusive partner who then sabotages their efforts toward recovery and threatens to disclose the substance use to the authorities (e.g., the police, treatment providers, the courts).



Having recognized the need for additional support for women in our counselling services who have substance use issues, VWTH is thankful for recent funding that has made it possible to add an additional full-time STV counsellor.

As well, funding has allowed all staff to complete enhanced training around substance use as it relates to IPV, safe naloxone administration protocols and expanded information and resources for clients with a harm reduction approach.

Karlee Grant, Senior Programs Manager, says "I'm feeling very optimistic that we're able to provide support and service to a portion of the population that has intersecting problems – we're addressing the stigma attached to IPV and to substance use. By reducing the shame attached we hope that more women will feel safe to disclose their challenges and that more individuals who need them will seek our services."



In Memory of Shirley Elm

A PASSIONATE & COMMITTED BOARD MEMBER

Shirley Elm was an amazing individual and champion for social justice. For six years Shirley served on the VWTH Board of Directors, and sat as a Chairperson for three of those years. Her leadership was tireless and she advocated for the services and governance of Victoria Women's Transition House Society. Her wisdom, warmth and humour will not be forgotten, nor her passion for inclusion and equity. At the end of her tenure Shirley volunteered to stay on with the Society by participating on the Advisory Circle for reconciliation. We humbly appreciate all of her work and dedication to our cause and we remain deeply grateful as we hold her memory of who she was and what she stood for.

The Board of Directors and staff extend their heartfelt condolences to Shirley's family and friends. She was much loved and our lives were enriched by her friendship and generosity. Shirley will be forever in our hearts.



Makenna Rielly, Executive Director (left) and Shirley Elm



Kudos to the Youth Counselling Team!

Women's Shelters Canada has invited VWTH to submit the Violence is Preventable video series to a national, online library. The series was a collaboration and produced by VWTH, a local Victoria high school and Roll.Focus. Productions and helped answer questions about relationship violence and the cycle of abuse. Developed during the Covid-19 pandemic as an additional educational tool, Women's Shelters Canada recommended the video series as a promising practice for other shelters.



Christmas Hampers



Thank you to our VWTH Gift Card Christmas Hamper Donors for your past support, and a warm welcome to our new donors! Last year we were able to provide 308 Gift Card Hampers to women, including many with families of more than one child. Thanks to your generosity, Hamper Donors made Christmas a little brighter for all. This year, VWTH will continue with the Gift Card Hamper Program empowering clients to select gifts and food of their choice for themselves and their families. Thank you to everyone who is participating in the Christmas Hamper Program this year and to those who have contributed in the past.

Donor Reflection

Thank you for your service and for helping women get back on their feet. Safety and freedom are basic needs and I am grateful you are there to help fulfill them.

– Nicole, a new monthly Donor.



Legacy Donor Story

GIFT IN WILL REFLECTS VALUES LIVED BY



Victoria artist, and VWTH supporter, Chin Yuen

Victoria Women’s Transition House is proud to have a friend in Chin Yuen, a Victoria-based artist who has generously supported our cause through donations and the colour and beauty of her art.

Around 10 years ago, Chin first supported VWTH through the donation of bedding and artwork for our Shelter. She did so out of a desire to support our shelter services and aid in the comfort of women and children in need of a haven. Chin believes in VWTH’s commitment to providing shelter and services to aid people suffering from intimate partner violence, societal inequity, and marginalization, and it is important to her to support services that help women find a safe place and transition out of crisis.

Chin said her mother was an inspiration.

“She grew up in an oppressive patriarchal society and wanted a better life for her daughters. It wasn’t an easy road to take, but she succeeded in providing her daughters with choices. Unfortunately, many girls grow up without that support.”

Along with the donations made during her lifetime, Chin has also included our organization in her Will, so that she may leave behind a legacy reflecting the values she lived by in life.

“Supporting women has always been important in my life,” said Chin. “As long as there is violence against women and lack of equity, there will always be children and women in need. Therefore, it was an easy decision to include the Victoria Women’s Transition House in my Will.”

Victoria Women’s Transition House is proud to be a part of the Will Power initiative, a national campaign devoted to inspiring Canadians to use their Wills as a means to support their favourite causes and charities. We encourage you to find out more, including how you can leave a gift in your Will, via our Will Power page at: willpower.ca/charities/victoria-womens-transition-house



It is with much respect to the Lekwungen 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.



Gift Giving



GIVE THE GIFT OF SHELTER

What to get the person who says “I have everything I need” or “please don’t buy me anything”? This Holiday Season, consider giving a donation to Victoria Women’s Transition House as a gift for a friend, relative, or colleague. When you make a **Tribute Gift**, a Holiday gift card will be sent to your Honouree on your behalf, by email or regular mail, as a notification of your thoughtful donation. And you will receive a tax receipt for the full amount of the gift with our sincere thanks.

To make a Tribute Gift please complete the donation form online: transitionhouse.net/donate-now providing details of your honouree in the ‘Dedication Information’ section. Or call 250-592-2927.





With Our Thanks

Victoria Women's Transition House sends our sincere thanks for generous gifts from **Victoria Foundation, Annual Foundation-Lisa Rogers, Prentice Family Fund, The Lake Family's All One Fund, ALACS Fund, Gratitude Foundation Fund, A&S Murphy Family Fund, Andrea and Dayle White, Price Family Charitable Gift Fund, Larry and Trish Murphy, Fiona Hyslop Fund, Marymax Fund, RBC Dominion Securities, Elements Casino, the Estate of Lois Mae Courtright and Anonymous.** As well, the **Barbara and Philip Potash Foundation** made a large directed gift to the PEACE/Children Who Witness Abuse Camps program and Families in Shelter project. Thank you, Kim Potash!

We gratefully received almost \$700 in donations from events held by **Foxy Box Laser & Wax Bar** in Langford and Victoria – thank you to the salons and their customers.

Thanks to everyone who donated to runner Chanterelle Arbic's **Beyond the Trail fundraiser** – together you raised over \$8,500! Part of that total was a donation from Marci at the **Ritual Nordic Spa Victoria.** She donated \$1 from each visitor to their

Women's Wellness Wednesday nights since March, topping it up to \$1,000. Thanks also to **Frontrunners Victoria** for providing Chanterelle with new running shoes and fuel, as she ventured out on the 47 km Juan de Fuca Trail in September.

Thank you to Andrew from **Construction Maintenance & Allied Workers Canada** (pictured below) who presented a donation of \$5,006 to VWTH including funds from "fines" paid from folks who forgot to silence their phones during a meeting. A very special thank you to the **Province of BC's Provincial Employees Community Services Fund (PECSF)** for hosting VWTH at the festive campaign kick-off event in early October. PECSF members



contributed nearly \$13,800 over the past year to VWTH.

Bouquets to Calvin Stevenson owner of **U Deserve Flowers** who donated several flats of potted plants and flower arrangements (pictured above) for Shelter and Harrison Place residents this fall.

Our thanks to members of the **Victoria Seventh-Day Adventist Church** for their donation of grocery store gift cards and hygiene products and to various individuals and groups in the community who donated quilts, boxed perfume, packing boxes for clients, books for children and adults, children's toys and new clothing, make-up and skin care products.

These are only highlights of the many generous monetary and gifts-in-kind received over the last few months. Thank you to everyone for your support!



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: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

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- Please contact me about monthly giving
- Please send me information about making a gift in my will to VWTH
- I have already included VWTH in my will

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