

Winter 2021



Winter Holidays at the Shelters

The Winter Holidays can be a stressful and challenging time for many. For women living in violent and abusive homes, this period can be particularly difficult.

Some women in an abusive relationship may decide to wait until after the Holidays to consider leaving their abuser. They don't want to disrupt their family and think that their children will have bad memories linked to Christmas from leaving the family home. The reality is that most women who come to the Victoria Women's Transition House Emergency Shelter experience an overwhelming feeling of relief—of safety and support. For the first time in a long time, they feel safe, valued and cared for—and the Holiday period is no different.

The Holiday Season can be an exciting and festive time at both our Shelter locations. The VWTH staff set up large Christmas trees and invite women and children to decorate. Children make gingerbread houses with their moms or an activity worker and there are Christmas books, Holiday activities and crafts to share with the little ones. Volunteers bake seasonal cookies and Christmas music fills the air. For Christmas dinner, a delicious, home-cooked meal is prepared by the house manager and volunteers and is served on festively decorated tables, with homemade

centrepieces, individual menus and Christmas crackers—always a favourite with the children. The meal is topped off with a variety of delicious desserts like apple pie and chocolate mousse.

“The Shelter is adorned with decorations and festive drawings created by children at the Shelter. The beautifully decorated tree will always hold a gift under it, for every woman and child,” shared the house manager.



As a client-centred organization, VWTH encourages women and children to enjoy their Holidays in a safe space and in a way that is appropriate for them. Residents who do not celebrate Christmas are still invited to partake in the festivities if they wish.

VWTH's **Emergency Shelter Program** offers women, with or without children, a safe and stable place to stay and make new positive memories for themselves. Individuals and families receive trauma-informed counselling, nourishing meals, basic care necessities, advocacy, legal and housing assistance, as well as community referrals.

All of VWTH's services, including women's and children's counselling and childminding support, will remain open and available throughout the Holiday period.

A Message from Joseph

When I was a child, my mother was in an abusive relationship. My little sister and I stayed here [VWTH's Emergency Shelter] one Christmas when I was around 10 years old. I cannot express how much help and support we received in our time of need and am forever grateful that these programs exist to help women and children in need. Although it was a troubling time, our Christmas and experience in the facility was truly amazing and I will never forget the generosity and the kindness of the people who helped us.

- **Joseph**, Past Client and Current Donor

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
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In Conversation with Our Family Law Advocate

Women who have experienced abuse in their relationships can often find legal processes stressful, overwhelming and intimidating. The **Family Law Advocacy Program** at Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH) offers clients information, referrals and support for legal issues related to abuse and intimate partner violence. We connected with the Program's family law advocate to learn more.

Why is the Family Law Advocacy Program needed?

Women who seek assistance often have a multitude of legal issues involving different areas of law, including family law, child protection, immigration and criminal law. Many VWTH clients do not know their rights or the steps they need to take to resolve their legal issues. Through the Program, I can support survivors by outlining important legal steps and explaining information clearly and concisely.

What is your role as the family law advocate (FLA)?

Survivors of intimate partner violence regularly face ongoing trauma that affects their physical, emotional and spiritual well-being—and they often blame themselves for the abuse. These factors, among others, can cause survivors to feel that people in the legal system may not believe them or help them make legal decisions. As an FLA, I practice using a trauma-informed approach and connect with clients to provide services that bring awareness

to their rights and support them to work through their legal matters in a timely manner.

How do you support survivors of abuse?

As a retired Métis lawyer with over 25 years of family, criminal and Aboriginal law experience, I use my knowledge of the law, including court procedures in both provincial and federal law, to assist women through the legal system. As an FLA, I do not give legal advice but support Transition House clients by:

- Providing legal information and education on relevant legal issues
- Offering Family Law support, which includes specialized client assistance to prioritize and address legal matters
- Advocating for supports and services

Using plain language, I explain court documents, orders or agreements such as no-contact orders and how these may impact the client's rights and obligations. When preparing clients for legal meetings or appearances in court, I assist them to identify, clarify and prioritize their legal issues. I also assist to fill out court forms and other legal documents.

In terms of advocacy, I refer clients to pro bono legal supports and other public legal services such as Legal Aid or the Victoria Justice Access Centre and, when needed, organize additional support such as translation services.



Since 2019, VWTH's family law advocate has supported over 150 women impacted by intimate partner violence and abuse. To learn more about the Family Law Advocacy Program, visit [transitionhouse.net](https://www.transitionhouse.net)



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

December 6 commemorates **The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women**, remembering survivors and victims who have experienced gender-based violence and those we have lost to it. December 6 falls within the **16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence**, an annual international

campaign used around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

The theme for this year's campaign, which runs from November 25 to December 10, 2021, is *Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now!*

To learn more and get involved, visit [women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/16-days.html](https://www.women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/commemorations-celebrations/16-days.html)



Youth and Children's Programs

The **Counselling & Empowerment (PEACE)/Children Who Witness Abuse** team has been adapting to new support and delivery models that follow COVID-19 health and safety guidelines and overcome barriers brought forward by the pandemic.

To meet the needs of our clients, the team developed multimedia tools for children, youth, and caregivers to access outside of the individual and group counselling program and fun seasonal camp. PEACE Program counsellors created podcasts for children to listen to discreetly from their own devices and, in collaboration with VWTH's education coordinator

and a local high school, produced the Violence is Preventable (VIP) video series. The VIP video series helps answer questions about relationship violence and the cycle of abuse. This was shared widely through social media platforms.

There are two new additional multimedia projects in development. We are currently creating a second series of VIP videos with our special guest, Murphy (pictured)—a friendly puppet that helps share age-appropriate information and coping tools with pre-school-age children who may witness or hear abuse in the home. And starting in January, the PEACE Program will host a series of webinars



for client-caregivers to help them navigate their family dynamics and support their children.

Although the pandemic required shifts in our programming, VWTH will continue its commitment to support clients, children, youth and their caregivers in person and through digital resources.



Designed for students, 3–18 years, **Violence is Preventable (VIP)** workshops increase healthy relationship skills, raise awareness of dating violence and inform children and youth about where to go for help while also developing awareness for school staff.

The workshops are tailored for young children, middle school or high school students, are facilitated by VWTH counsellors and are offered free of charge. For more information, visit transitionhouse.net/our-programs/childreneyouth-programs. To book a VIP workshop at your school, club or community group, contact us at info@vwth.bc.ca or **250.592.2927**



Engaging Men and Boys In Anti-Violence Work

Police-reported data shows that in cases of family violence, girls and women are more than twice as likely to be victims of offences involving violence or the threat of violence and are 5.5 times more likely to be a victim of a sexual offence compared with boys and men. *Source: Statistics Canada, 2019*

As organizations and communities, in addition to supporting survivors of violence and abuse, it is also important to focus on prevention. Research tells us that children who witness abuse in the home are more likely to enter into abusive relationships as victims or abusers. Add into the mix, factors such as toxic masculinity; gender stereotypes; the need for power and control over a partner or family member; lack of accountability and there's a higher likelihood that boys and men might



become violent or abusive towards girls and women.

By offering supports and engaging men in counselling and anti-violence work from a young age, we can start to have conversations of understanding and healing, encourage real change in behaviours, attitudes and actions and create powerful anti-violence advocates and change-makers.

VWTH's **PEACE/Children Who Witness Abuse Program** offers **Violence is Preventable (VIP)** workshops for students in school and individual and age-appropriate counselling for boys aged 12-14, as well as individual and group counselling for girls, *Shine*. These counselling programs provide a safe space for understanding and learning how to cultivate healthy relationships. Topics include issues related to consent, anger, assertiveness, boundaries and self-esteem.

Organizations such as the Moosehide Campaign and Next Gen Men are also working towards hopeful change by engaging boys and men in anti-violence work and offering programming that provides the skills and support to develop healthy relationships.



Community Spotlight: Huntingdon Manor Stocking Drive

Julia Canton is the director of sales and marketing at the **Huntingdon Manor Hotel and Pendray Inn and Tea House**. Over the years, staff and partners at the hotel and tea house have come together to host Christmas Stocking fundraisers to bring joy to Transition House clients staying at our Emergency Shelters over the winter Holiday period. We connected with Julia to ask a few questions.

Tell us a bit about Huntingdon Manor Hotel.

The Huntingdon Manor and Pendray Inn and Tea House are located in downtown Victoria, by the Inner Harbour. We welcome guests from across Canada and around the world.

What inspired Huntingdon Manor to support Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH)?

Helping and supporting our community is very important to us and is one of our founding values at the Huntingdon Manor. We believe that the services VWTH brings to the community are indispensable - providing shelter, comfort and counselling to women and children in crisis. We saw the many positive outcomes VWTH has brought to the community and wanted to support the cause. This is when one of our managers came up with the idea of collecting Christmas Stockings to distribute to the women and families supported by VWTH during the Holiday season.

This time of year in particular can be difficult, and we wanted to bring a bit of joy and happiness where it was needed most. We began the stocking fundraising event in 2016 and continued every year until the pandemic arrived. In 2019, over 100 stockings as well as countless toys and gifts, were collected from local businesses and individual donors for our fundraiser (pictured). Both our staff and partners always looked forward to this annual event.



Why does this cause matter to you?

To have a healthy community, support and help for each other is key. Violence towards women continues to be a big issue in our society. Abused women may have nowhere to turn if it weren't for organizations like VWTH. Providing a safe space and offering survivors the support to overcome the abuse they have experienced is so important as it brings opportunities for a new start in life.

As a woman and a mother, I find it reassuring that such services are available in our community and I'm proud to be working for a company that supports organizations such as VWTH. Thank you, VWTH, for everything you do!

We are delighted to share that this year Huntingdon Manor and Pendray Inn and Tea House staff will be participating in the VWTH **Christmas Hamper Program**. Thank you friends for your continued support of Victoria Women's Transition House and the women and children we serve.

To learn more about the VWTH Christmas Hamper Program, visit [transitionhouse.net/support-us/christmas-hamper-program](https://www.transitionhouse.net/support-us/christmas-hamper-program)



Christmas Hampers

2021 has continued to be challenging and unpredictable for everybody, especially Victoria Women's Transition House clients—women and children impacted by violence and abuse. Last year, VWTH changed its **Christmas Hamper Program** from gifts to gift cards, empowering clients to choose gifts and food of their choice for themselves and their families. By client request, VWTH continues with gift cards for the 2021 Hamper season, matching donors to client families.

Thank you to everyone who is participating in the Christmas Hamper Program this year and to those who have contributed in years past. Your gifts mean a lot to their recipients.

Client Reflection

To the staff at Victoria Women's Transition House Society: my son and I would like to give a special thank you for providing us with resources to move to a safe location. We would also like to say thank you to the donor for the generous donation of gift cards to help out this Christmas. I am filled with so much gratitude that I can now provide my son a safe and nurturing home, and I couldn't have done it without your support. Wishing you all a safe and blessed Holiday season.

- VWTH Client and 2020 Christmas Hamper Recipient



A Message From Our New Volunteer Program Coordinator

Since its inception, volunteers have played a vital role at Victoria Women's Transition House. Our **Volunteer Program** currently has over 75 volunteers who support a number of VWTH's programs such as the 24-hour Crisis and Information Line; Emergency Shelters; Second/Third Stage Transitional Housing, as well as community-led initiatives by organizations such as Soup Sisters and Gatton House Farm—both have generously contributed to help provide food for Transition House clients over the years. As the new volunteer program coordinator, it has been incredible to see the overwhelming support of and commitment to VWTH.

Following COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, some volunteers recently returned to assist us in our work.



I am excited to prepare for our next VWTH series of volunteer training sessions that will launch in the New Year.

In summary, I am honoured to have joined the Volunteer Program and look forward to carrying on the strong VWTH traditions of service and support.



Volunteer Reflection

My volunteer experiences with VWTH began a few years ago as I was seeking out opportunities to be a 'hands-on' volunteer. I reached out to the VWTH and was immediately connected to their warm and attentive volunteer coordinator, who matched me with opportunities in two different areas.

The first was representing VWTH as a spokesperson at the monthly Soup Sisters event. I found this experience enriching in so many ways—witnessing the Soup Sisters in action made it easy to speak to groups of people each month about the importance of VWTH and the impact the contributions have with those individuals attending the events. Second, it was full circle for me when I visited the Shelter as a volunteer cook to see the stacks of soups in the freezer and know the story behind the soups.

Preparing and providing meals for women and children is such an easy way to offer my time and enjoy doing what I love—cooking. Every week, someone pokes their head into the kitchen to ask, "what's for dinner?" then offers sincere interest, thanks, and appreciation for having a cooked meal prepared for them and their family.

The staff, clients and other volunteers make me feel a part of a small community working to support each other—showing gratitude, flexibility, and acceptance along the way.

- VWTH Volunteer



Donor Spotlight



"Be the reason someone smiles today." - Julie Rust, Monthly Donor

Julie Rust is a loyal monthly donor to Victoria Women's Transition House, supportive of the organization and dedicated to the cause of helping women and children fleeing violence and abuse.

A licensed realtor specializing in selling properties in the Greater Victoria area and the West Shore Communities, Julie is also a wife and mother of three active teenagers. When she is

not hard at work helping her clients, Julie is supporting her children's education and sporting pursuits, playing tennis, walking with her dog Snoop and contributing to various charitable causes.

Julie is also the lead sponsor in **Dance Victoria's Nutcracker Kids Program**, giving VWTH's clients and their families as well as staff and volunteers access to a digital version of the lavish Nutcracker ballet performance.

Thank you, Julie Rust, for supporting the women and children we serve and for helping to make the Holidays a little brighter for our clients and their children.





With Our Thanks

Thank you to the **Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust** for supporting *Turning the Tide: a Program for Senior Women*. Thanks to the **Newman's Own Foundation** and **West Shore RCMP Community Policing Advisory Committee** for their contribution to the Violence is Preventable youth workshop program. A grateful thank you to the **TLC Fund for Kids** for supporting our PEACE/Children Who Witness Abuse Program's spring and summer camps, and warm thanks to the **Carlton House of Oak Bay Knitting Club**, who donated knitted scarves, gloves, ear warmers and hand-crafted toys.

Shopping carts full of thanks to **Sobeys** for their gift of Thrifty grocery gift cards, and bundles of thanks to **Island Flooring** for their generous donation of labour and flooring materials for our Second/Third Stage Transitional Housing.



We are grateful to the **University of Victoria Commerce Student Society** (bottom left) who hosted a Charity Wine and Paint Night to mark International Day of the Girl on October 5 and to VWTH Charity Champion **Lily Krantz** and her dog **Dandelion**, in lobster costume (bottom right) for completing the Victoria Goddess Run October Harvest Moon 5km with generous contributions from **Paws on Cook** as well as many friends and family.

Victoria Women's Transition House is deeply grateful to the Estate of **Madelon Matheson** and the Estate of **Caro Hagar** for their thoughtful and generous gifts.



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 supporting women and children impacted by violence and abuse. If you are interested and it is helpful, we are 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 VWTH? 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 info@vwth.bc.ca or **250.592.2927**



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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