

# CANADIAN NETWORK OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS & TRANSITION HOUSES

## *What is the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses?*

Drawn together by a shared vision to end violence against women, the provincial/territorial organizations representing women's shelters began giving shape to the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses in 2009. The Network was incorporated and became a charitable organization in November 2012.

We represent a unified voice that works to make violence against women a priority. By collaborating with our members and their affiliate shelters, the Network is uniquely positioned to bring about lasting and significant change.

We provide a vital space for collaboration and social innovation on the issue of violence against women and more specifically the role of shelters. We collaborate, educate, and innovate to end violence against women, working to make Canada a world leader in the eradication of gender-based violence.

### ***Our Beliefs***

The 12 current members of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses have more than 350 individual member shelters. Together, we are guided by our shared beliefs:

- We believe that governments and societies are responsible for ensuring women's human rights.
- We believe that violence violates women's human rights and equality.
- We believe that the women's shelter movement plays a critical leadership role in the provincial/territorial, national, and global effort to end violence against women and their children.

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Welcome to the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses' first e-newsletter. As you may know, the Network was incorporated in November 2012 and I have been with the Network for just over one year, having joined in April 2013. For the time being, I am the only paid staff. Prior to joining the Network, I served as the Executive Director of Women's Worlds 2011 and for many years I was the Executive Director of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW). Having worked at the national level within the women's movement for many years, I am cognizant of the challenges ahead, but I also believe that it is important that we be able to mobilize ourselves and present a unified voice on violence against women.

The purpose of the e-newsletter is both to inform shelters across the country of the work undertaken by the national Network and to provide a space for information sharing between shelters across the country. I will do my best to keep the newsletter informative and concise. If you would like to share news from your shelter, perhaps an innovative practice that you have just implemented or a successful fundraising or public education campaign, please let us know and we will include this in our next newsletter. I look forward to hearing from you.

**Lise Martin**

*Executive Director*



Canadian Network of Women's  
Shelters & Transition Houses

Réseau canadien des maisons  
d'hébergement pour femmes

## News from Europe

### European Treaty on Violence Against Women

The “Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence” – known informally as the “[Istanbul Convention](#)” – is the first European treaty specifically targeting violence against women and domestic violence. It sets out minimum standards on prevention, protection, prosecution, and services. Countries ratifying must also establish services such as hotlines, shelters, medical services, counselling, and legal aid.

This treaty will oblige governments to take concrete steps to help women and girls facing violent attacks. The treaty defines various forms of violence against women (including sexual violence, physical and psychological violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and stalking), and calls for their criminalization.

### Shelter Voices – an annual survey of shelters

*“Coming from a life of abuse, I have never been treated with such kindness and respect.”*

*“It’s so hard to watch how the system wears women down, especially when they have so many barriers, that they want to give up. That’s why we care so much because every woman should feel like she has a chance to make it.”*

The Network released the results of its first annual shelter survey on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014. A total of 242 shelters from all regions of the country responded to our on-line survey. We named the survey, **Shelter Voices**, wanting to highlight the voices behind the numbers - the voices of the women who find refuge at the shelters but also the women who work at the shelters and offer much needed support to thousands of women across the country. The survey was the subject of an article in the Toronto Star, [Disturbing Snapshot of Women’s Shelters](#), on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Interestingly, shelters in the major urban centres responded to the survey in lesser numbers. Only 20% of responses came from shelters in cities with a population above 500,000. In response to shelter workers identifying their top three issues, the answers in both the French and English were the same. These are:

- Concern over the inability to effectively address increasingly complex issues clients face
- Feeling of not being able to affect the systemic causes of the issues facing clients
- Low pay

The data from the survey will be reflected in the Global Data Count of Shelters to be released by the Alberta Council of Women’s Shelters in late May. If you would like paper copies of Shelter Voices please send us an email. We very much want to make this an annual survey and will be repeating the exercise in November 2014. If you would like to propose an additional question in next year’s survey, please send us an email.

### Developing a Blueprint for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women

#### National Action Plan on Violence Against Women

In October 2013 we released [The Case for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women](#), a major study which outlines why Canada would benefit from a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women (NAP on VAW). Having a NAP on VAW would, among other things, ensure consistency across and within jurisdictions in policies and legislation that address VAW, provide a shared understanding of the root causes of VAW, as well as allow for consistent approaches to prevention of VAW and responses.

A meeting of key partners was convened in October 2013 to gauge their interest in furthering this work. With the support of the Network’s members and partners, a work plan which includes the collaborative development of a blueprint for Canada’s NAP on VAW was developed. Funding was sought and obtained from several unions to pursue this work which is ongoing. During the next year, the Network will continue to provide leadership in developing a blueprint for Canada’s National Action Plan which will be reflective of the violence against women sector and the diversity of the women’s movement in Canada.

## News from Europe

### *Violence Against Women – an EU wide survey*

This groundbreaking [survey](#) from the Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) of the European Union is the first of its kind on violence against women across the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU). It is based on interviews with 42,000 women across the EU, who were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological violence, including incidents of intimate partner violence (domestic violence).

The survey also included questions on stalking, sexual harassment, and the role played by new technologies in women's experiences of abuse. In addition, it asked about their experiences of violence in childhood. Based on the detailed findings, FRA suggests courses of action in different areas that are touched by violence against women and go beyond the narrow confines of criminal law, ranging from employment and health to the medium of new technologies.

## News from Our Members

### **Alberta**

Release of new [guidelines](#) developed by the [Alberta Council of Women's Shelters](#) (ACWS), police and government, designed to ensure victims of domestic violence get the help they need

These guidelines are designed to clarify the respective roles of police and shelters, as well as provide advice on the best practices for several situations that arise in domestic violence cases, including conducting interviews, retrieving the victim's belongings from the home, and addressing safety concerns arising from court appearances. The document combines broad principles police should follow when investigating domestic violence cases and more detailed step-by-step checklists officers and shelter staff should follow when working with victims.

"Considering the complexities involved in predicting behaviour and assessing risk, it's important to keep refining how domestic violence cases are handled. We continue to learn as we go along. It's not static," said Jan Reimer, Executive Director of ACWS.

### **Northwest Territories**

#### **[BETTY House](#) (Second stage Housing) Under Construction in Yellowknife**

YWCA Yellowknife ED Lyda Fuller is "waiting with great anticipation" for the completion of construction on their newest housing facility. When it opens in the late summer or early fall of 2014, women who need second stage housing will have 12 new apartments to choose from. Debby Rybchinski, the YWCA's manager of Alison McAteer House (a 12 bed shelter for women and

children leaving situations of violence and abuse) is keen to have real options for women to move to. The building will also contain six bedsitting units on the ground floor. These are to accommodate single women, who are low priority on public housing waiting lists. A program room with a kitchen area will allow staff to offer a variety of community based programming, from a community kitchen to computer upgrading or literacy skills.

The construction of the \$4.8 million residential building is funded by the GNWT Housing Corporation, the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy funds (which also purchased the four lots on which the building sits), Dominion Diamond Ekati Corporation, and other private donors. YWCA Yellowknife will be the owner and operator of BETTY House upon its completion.

### **Quebec**

#### **["Vivre la violence conjugale"](#) Campaign**

« Living Domestic Violence » is a campaign of the 45 member shelters of the [Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale](#), which are spread out across the province of Quebec. The objective is to encourage women to provide testimonials of their lived experience. Shelter workers as well as the children of the women survivors were also called upon.

By inviting women to speak out, the Regroupement is hoping that the general population can get a better understanding of the realities of these women's lives and the impact of domestic violence. The campaign also allows women to see that they are not alone and that help is available.

## *Third World Conference of Women's Shelters (WCWS)*

Following the success of the 1<sup>st</sup> WCWS in Edmonton (2008) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> WCWS in Washington (2012), the [Global Network of Women's Shelters](#) (GNWS), of which we are a member, is aiming to organize a 3<sup>rd</sup> WCWS in the Netherlands in November (3-6), 2015.

The Conference aims to bring together advocates engaged in combating domestic violence and violence against women. The majority of participants are practitioners from NGOs and grassroots organizations who are working directly in the prevention of violence and the support of victims. The primary objective of the conference is to share experiences in the field and to find the strength, knowledge and support to continue combating violence against women.

Among the themes being discussed are; new approaches in shelters, financing and managing your shelter and shelter and agency approach. The conference is to be hosted by [Federatie OPVANG](#), the umbrella organization of shelters in the Netherlands.

## *Resources*

### **Articles**

#### [Women's rights country by country – interactive](#)

Which countries have laws preventing violence? Which legislate for gender equality? And which countries allow abortion? Using World Bank and UN data we offer a snapshot of women's rights across the globe.

#### [How Canada keeps some immigrant women in their place](#)

If a Canadian woman is abused by her partner, the system is supposed to protect her, but when an immigrant woman is abused by her Canadian sponsor, she is treated as the wrongdoer. How did this happen?

#### [Shocking example of unintended consequences: Mandatory domestic violence arrests raise death rate 400%, study finds](#)

A shocking illustration of unintended consequences, the long-term analysis of 1200 domestic violence cases in Milwaukee marks the greatest challenge yet to the “mandatory arrest” policies that were adopted across North America and Britain in the 1980s.

#### [Winnipeg becomes the first Canadian city to join UN Women's Safe Cities Global Initiative](#)

“By joining the Global Safe Cities Initiative today, Winnipeg becomes part of a growing global movement that says no to violence against women and takes concrete action”

### **Reports**

#### [Inuit Vulnerabilities to Human Trafficking](#)

### **Podcasts**

#### [Could an App Help Stem Domestic Violence? \(12/17/13\)](#)

#### [Do Abused Women Have the Right to Kill Their Abusers? \(12/19/13\)](#)

#### [How Abuse Plays a Role on Why Single Moms are on Welfare \(4/30/14\)](#)

#### [Laura's House Podcast \(20/11/2013\)](#)

### **Videos**

#### [“A French Film Showing Men What Being a Woman Feels Like Kinda Nails It”](#)



**This e-Newsletter** is produced by the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses, a coalition of 12 provincial and territorial shelter networks representing over 350 shelters across Canada. The network works as a unified voice to collaborate, educate, and innovate for systemic change that ends violence against women, making Canada a model for safety in the world.

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