



Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses



Annual Report

2014-15

WELCOME

CANADIAN NETWORK OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS AND TRANSITION HOUSES

We provide a strong unified voice on the issue of violence against women at the national level. Working with women's shelters and transition houses we provide leadership by collaborating, educating and innovating for systemic change that will lead to ending violence against women and children.

Our 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.

A Unified Voice

We provide a strong, unified voice on the issue of violence against women. A unified voice means the issue of violence against women is on the agenda at the national level. It means the vital role of shelters and transition houses is understood and valued. It means hope to women experiencing violence everywhere. With our voice, we help increase awareness to ensure that policies, legislation and regulations are informed by the experiences and insights of our members.

A Space for Collaboration

We create opportunities to exchange ideas, learn from one another and share resources. We connect knowledgeable and dedicated individuals from coast to coast to coast. Exciting new ideas are born, best practices are promoted and transferred and those who work in our challenging field feel more connected and more supported. All of this helps to ensure the women and children who turn to shelters and transition houses receive the most effective and compassionate support possible.



COLLABORATION

This has been an exciting second year for the Network. We have continued to expand and solidify our partnerships and to amplify the voices of shelters. As so many work tirelessly to bring an end to violence against women, collaboration is key. During this last year we brought together over 20 national and provincial organizations working in different areas of violence against women to envision what a national strategy on violence against women could look like. The outcome was a Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence Against women. The Blueprint recognizes the need to address the full continuum of violence against women and the need for women in all regions of the country to have access to comparable levels of services and protection.

We have highlighted the role of shelters in addressing violence against women through the creation of sheltersafe.ca and the publication of Shelter Voices, our 2nd annual survey of shelters. This work is an integral part of the Network's goal to ensure that shelters and transitions houses along with their workers be recognized for their expertise.

Another objective of the Network is to provide opportunities for knowledge exchange between shelters. Our practice exchange project will make it easier for women's shelters to share, develop and implement successful shelter practices. With guidance from shelter workers, we are developing a set of tools to help shelters create shareable practice guides, along with a framework and a manual for reviewing, implementing and discussing these practices.

Sustaining our work by diversifying our sources of funding has been a priority. We are grateful to the unions and the Canadian Women's Foundation which have supported our work on the Blueprint. A special thank you to the RBC Foundation which believed in our vision of sheltersafe.ca, our online resource which facilitates the connection between women and the shelters in their communities. Thanks to Status of Women Canada for supporting our knowledge exchange project.

Working with our provincial and territorial members we will continue to work for both short and longer term change that will lead to better outcomes for women and their children and an eventual end to violence against women.

Lise Martin
Executive Director

Manon Monastesse
Co-Chair

Jan Reimer
Co-Chair

WHO WE ARE

Board of Directors

Jan Reimer (Co-chair) / Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
Manon Monastesse (Co-chair) / Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes
Diane Delaney (Secretary) / Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan
Lyda Fuller (Treasurer) / YWCA Yellowknife
Caron Statham / Help and Hope for Families Society
Deena Brock / Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters
Ellen Ridgeway / PEI Family Violence Prevention Services
Dan Meades / Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
Leslie Lewis / BC Society of Transition Houses
Louise Riendeau / Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale
Pamela Harrison / Transition House Association of Nova Scotia

Staff

Lise Martin / Executive Director
Heather Stewart / Project Officer – Knowledge Management and Creation
Patricia Hendrick / Part-time Financial Officer

Volunteers

Sara Hedges-Chou
Yulanda Lui (Loran Intern / summer 2014)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORTERS

Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Canadian Women's Foundation
Delaney Family Foundation

Justice Canada
National Union of Public and General Employees
Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association
RBC Foundation
Status of Women Canada

OUR WORK

A productive second year - a look back

Shelter Voices

A national survey of shelters

The second annual shelter survey gave voice to the women who work in shelters as well as those the women and children they serve. The survey highlighted the fact that shelters on one particular day had to turn away 302 women and 221 children, mostly due to lack of resources. When asked what they would do to make things better for women survivors and their children, an overwhelming number of shelter workers called for a more integrated network of support services.

Engaging in Knowledge Exchange

The Practice Exchange Project

Good ideas are worth sharing, especially when they help to save lives. We have continued to further develop our Practice Exchange Project which will make it easier for women's shelters across Canada to share, develop and implement successful shelter practices. With guidance from shelter workers, the Network is developing a set of tools to help shelters create shareable practice guides, along with a framework and a manual for reviewing, implementing and discussing these practices. To guide the project, focus-groups were held in Ottawa, Winnipeg, Montreal and Barrie.

Sheltersafe.ca

In November of 2014, the Network began laying the groundwork for sheltersafe.ca, an online tool that allows women to connect 24/7 with shelters in their communities. The objective of this tool is to provide a quick and easy resource for women directly impacted by violence as well as for concerned friends, family, employers and employee assistance programs. There is no comparable resource in Canada. The web site was designed to be intuitive and easy to find. Its primary purpose is facilitating women's access to safety.

Blueprint for a National Action Plan on Violence Against Women

In April 2014 the Network brought together representatives from 23 organizations working at either the national or provincial level to begin the process of collaboratively developing a Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence Against Women. Designed by organizations working directly on the issue, the Blueprint provides a roadmap for Canada's Plan. It addresses the continuum of violence against women from cyber violence to sexual violence to domestic violence. The Blueprint was finalized and released in February 2015.

“Listening remains the most important key for helping women to feel understood and believed. Despite everything, when these women have someone to accompany them in their journey it gives them a chance to move in a more positive direction because they feel supported.”
... Shelter Worker

“I learned how to feel, set boundaries, have self-esteem, and be independent. It became our safe haven where everyone was treated with respect. I always think of the shelter as the stepping stone to my future... without it, there might have been no future at all.”
... Survivor