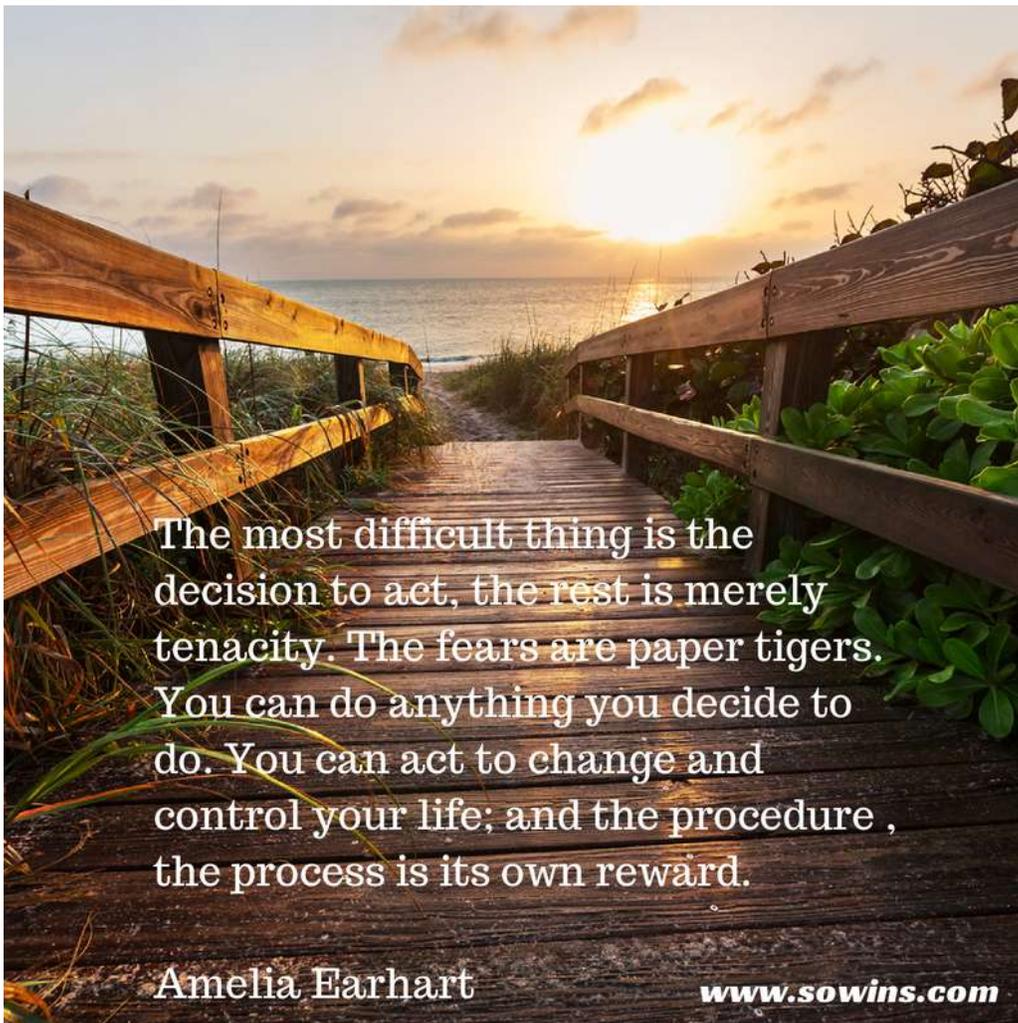




# ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 – MARCH 31<sup>st</sup> 2015



303 – 246 Martin Street, Penticton, BC  
(250) 493-4366 ~ [info@sowins.com](mailto:info@sowins.com)  
[www.sowins.com](http://www.sowins.com)

A report on activities of the South Okanagan Women in Need Society for the period April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015

## SOWINS

303-246 Martin Street,  
Penticton BC V2A 5K3  
t. 250-493-4366  
f. 250-493-3158  
e. info@sowins.com  
www.sowins.com  
BC Society #S-16224  
CTN: #12998 7665RR0001

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2... Board at March 31, 2015
- 3... Governance
- 4...Operations
- 6... Marketing & Volunteers
- 7... Fundraising/Public Relations
- 9... Specialized Services
- 11...Community Outreach
- 12...Children Who Witness Abuse
- 13...Mature Women Outreach
- 14...Women's Outreach
- 15...Transition House & Safe Homes
- 17 ... Safe Home
- 18 ... Homeless Prevention
- 19 ...Human Resources
- 19 ... Thanks For the Soup
- 20 ...A Personal Impact Story



## VISION

A world where women and children live free of abuse and violence

## MISSION

To provide empowerment through short-term housing, support to families, and building of awareness about abuse in the communities of the South Okanagan.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

at March 31, 2015

Peggy Nicholson,  
President

Maimie Desilva,  
Acting Vice President

Trudy Hanratty,  
Treasurer

Nicole Clark,  
Acting Secretary, Interim Director

Valerie Plourde,  
Director

Shannon Stewart,  
Interim Director

## Governance Report ~ Peggy Nicholson, President

This past year has been full of changes, new initiatives and renewed energy. Our Executive Director, Debbie Scarborough, has brought fresh ideas, passion, and commitment to our organization. One of her greatest strengths is connecting with our community. It is through these connections that we become stronger and provide the best services for our women and children. Last summer, it was evident to the Board that our social enterprise WINGS store was no longer fiscally viable for SOWINS. We closed the store and were able to sell it in a very timely manner. Our women and children have been able to acquire clothing from Pipsqueaks and Damsels and from Care Closet. We have recently entered into an agreement with the Salvation Army.

Second Stage Housing has become urgent for our clients; finding affordable rentals for our women and children is almost impossible. With a grant from the Homeless Initiative Program, we are helping several women find affordable housing. We are now working with B.C. Housing to find a building that would house our offices and provide apartments for our women and children. The Board is very excited that this part of our Strategic Plan is starting to take shape and that we have such support from B.C. Housing.

The renovations at our Transition House were completed in August 2014. We now have office space, private counselling rooms and one room to be used to support a youth bed.

After receiving input from several companies, the Board selected White Kennedy to be our auditors. In November, after much time and effort, we received the standard accreditation from Imagine Canada Ethical Code.

At present, the Board of Directors of SOWINS is comprised of the Board Chair and five Directors whose primary function is to provide sound governance in accordance and in compliance with: the BC Society Act, Imagine Canada Ethical Code and SOWINS' own Vision, Constitution, By-Laws, and code of Ethics and Values. Our decisions align with the Strategic Plan and support the Executive

Director through sound and informed governance. We do our work through these committees: Policy, Finance, Fundraising and Public Relations, and Board Development. We are looking forward to welcoming several new Board members at our AGM.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our Executive Director, Debbie Scarborough, for her solid leadership, energy and vision. It has been a pleasure to be a part of the growth we have witnessed this past year. We also recognize and thank our amazing staff. Their compassion, dedication and strong team work is the key to our successful programs.

Volunteers are integral to SOWINS and we appreciate their support. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of our Board of Directors, present and recently retired. Their professionalism, wisdom, and dedication to our Strategic plan are so important to the growth of our organization.

*Volunteers are integral to  
SOWINS and we  
appreciate  
their support.*

# Operations Report ~ Debbie Scarborough, Executive Director

Since my first day in the office June 16, 2014, I have been amazed and rewarded many times over by the commitment, dedication, creativity and passion of the staff, Board and our many volunteers. I arrived into this organization at a time where change was simmering under the surface waiting to emerge. One of my objectives was to assist in the emergence of that change.

Many significant milestones have occurred over the year. This AGM Report provides an opportunity to highlight a few of these.

## 1. Establishing healthy working relationships

A high priority for me as I began my new role was the introduction, building, maintenance, and fostering of healthy working relationships throughout the organization. Key to this was ensuring that staff felt that their job titles and descriptions accurately represented the job they were doing; that their positions meshed with their skills, experience and strengths; and that they were clear about the role they played within the organization. In undertaking this work, various other meaningful changes occurred, including engaging staff and program areas in budget preparations and discussions, moving to a transparent and open budget process and encouraging input and feedback on SOWINS operations. Additionally I learned from staff

members about where they saw SOWINS going, what their aspirations for SOWINS were and how they saw themselves being a part of that as well as how I could support them in their role and in their work.

## 2. Community Collaboration

Collaboration is vital to our organization's success in the community. Success in this context means being known, respected, acknowledged for making a difference, providing invaluable services and having those services carried out by a team of caring and collaborative people. Many of the women and children who access our services also access our sister and brother organizations. This year we set out to establish collaborative working relationships to ensure we were not duplicating services and to determine how, by working together we might provide the best service(s) possible for our community. This objective was met with enthusiasm.

*Collaboration is vital to our organization's success in the community. . . being known, respected, acknowledged for making a difference, providing invaluable services and having those services carried out by a team of caring and collaborative people.*

Weekly meetings with Executive Directors of sister organizations were initiated and have grown to more than 10 agencies. Our first joint venture with some of our sister organizations was Take Back the Night in September, which we took on with SOVAS and The Access Centre.

### 3. Increasing Awareness of Best Practices

Changes have occurred within our individual programs. These changes came as a result of growing awareness of best practices and striving to incorporate the same. As a result, procedures, staffing and even physical spaces have changed and improved to heighten and expand client service, improve the work environment and create a new, larger, more interactive child play space at the Transition House. Offices have moved around, furniture has been changed, walls have been painted and our own art work adorns our office walls.

### 4. Wellness Committee

This year SOWINS created our first Wellness Committee. This committee met, organized and hosted its first Wellness event in which staff came together to share great food, talk and play games. Through these activities stories were shared and we learned more about each other. Small tokens were offered to each staff member to acknowledge their years of service.

### 5. Community Outreach

We have worked hard this year to be visible in the community and it seems that we have provided education, services and support everywhere - in schools, in places of employment, in post-secondary institutions, churches and in homes.

This outreach has resulted in two new initiatives: we are working with Ministry for Children and Family Development to fund a youth bed in our Transition House, and we are working with BC Housing and the City Council to provide affordable safe second stage housing in Penticton.

Our Strategic Plan presents an organization where we provide various programs that work with women and their children to recognize understand and overcome the impact of their abuse. These new initiatives will present the opportunity for the women and children to stay at our Transition House and Safe Homes and then after their short stay, move into our Second Stage Housing Units for up to a year and provide them the time to seek employment, go back to school and recreate their life without abuse.

### 6. WINGS Closes Its Doors

This year saw the closure of our WINGS Thrift Store. The services we provided through this outlet are well addressed by other organizations in the community along with a free store, which is being created at the Transition House. The WINGS store was not breaking even and costing SOWINS money. The closure of WINGS has allowed us to redirect our resources.

It has been an exciting and eventful year at SOWINS. It has been a year of renewal and change, and I expect we will see more change in the future as we continue to evolve, create and innovate. I would like to thank the Board and staff for welcoming me to SOWINS, for your support and for your patience as I learned about the organization, the community and the wonderful team of people with whom I work.





We will also be launching Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® South Okanagan – our major peer to peer fundraising campaign that is also an opportunity to raise awareness about the impacts of abuse. This campaign will be capitalizing not only on our local connections but also using the “friendship powered fundraising” of social media to expand the potential reach of donors, sponsors and participants [www.sowins.com/wamso](http://www.sowins.com/wamso)

I would like to thank all of our volunteers for their hard work and dedication; especially our Board of Directors whose countless volunteer hours are a major pillar of support. I would also like to thank the SOWINS staff members who volunteer their time to our annual programs and events.

---

## Fundraising & Public Relations ~ Samarpan Faasse, Coordinator

### Communication

Part of my role at SOWINS is communicating about a difficult topic that effects all of us.

Speaking openly about the reality of violence and abuse; its effects on individuals, families and community, is fundamental to SOWINS' educational and awareness-raising role. It is a common thread throughout writing grant applications, press releases and articles.

Our monthly article in Penticton Herald's Down Town Reporter, is one way we do this. An expanded circulation in 2014 means our article now reaches readers throughout the Okanagan Region.

Awareness and education are the root (route) of prevention and of connecting to funding sources that will help us do our work.

### Fundraising

Contract funding provides about 70% - 75% of SOWINS' budget. We must raise the remainder in order to deliver the services our contracts require. We do this through donations, events and community support. The many well established and special relationships we have with our caring donors and major funding partners are very

encouraging. Through your support, we are able to maintain an excellent level of service for the women and children we serve.

### New Major Fundraiser Replaces the Gala

Seeking a change after the successful nine year run of the Gala and encouraged by the response to the inaugural Walk a Mile Challenge in 2013 we decided to focus our energy on Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® South Okanagan as our new annual fundraiser.

---

 [www.walkamileinher shoes.org](http://www.walkamileinher shoes.org)

## Walk a Mile in Her Shoes® South Okanagan

[www.sowins.com/wamso](http://www.sowins.com/wamso)

**Thursday, October 8, 2015**  
3pm at Rotary Park on Lakeshore Drive, Penticton





**WALK A MILE IN  
HER SHOES®**  
South Okanagan





## Community Engagement in Fundraising

Third Party fundraisers are a great way for our supporters to raise funds on our behalf. These events require few resources from (an already resource strapped) SOWINS and are a good link to the generosity of the broader community. Some highlights of the 2014 year

Quota Club: SOWINS and Quota's partnership continued for another year at the Canada Day festivities as volunteers stood side by side cooking up pancakes and burgers to help our organizations do our community work.

Twin Lakes Iron woman Golf Tournament: 2014 saw the first tournament which is now an annual fundraiser for SOWINS. Gayle Bukowski and her committee do a fantastic job of engaging women from throughout BC.

100 Women Strong: SOWINS' was the grateful and happy recipient of a donation from the 100 women strong group. Debbie Scarborough gave a moving and informative appeal to the group which inspired them to give an evening's proceeds to SOWINS.

Andrew Sheret Fundraiser: Damon Bremner, Taylor Perdue and the rest of the team at Andrew Sheret hosted a fundraiser for SOWINS from April through October. They

had many creative and fun approaches to raising \$\$\$. One highlight was the raffle draw, when the winning ticket for the gift basket was drawn from a toilet bowl!

Shoppers Drug Mart Tree Of Life: at the Summerland Store held their Annual Tree of Life Campaign in support of SOWINS  
Hummingbird Rooms for Peace Campaign: Helped to create "Rooms for Peace" through the online sale of T-shirts. One room is the calm, welcoming space at SOWINS' office; the other a bright, uplifting space for children at the Transition House. The campaign was initiated by Wendy Bingelli and Jodi Forster.

At SOWINS we appreciate the support of community. Each year our programs and services assist close to 1000 women and children; each of them facing their own challenging situation. When we give them the support needed to choose change, we improve their lives and make our community a better place for everyone. Let's keep up the good work!



# Specialized Services for Female Victims of Violence

**Brenda E. Wasnock, RSW, Coordinator** (Retired June 1, 2015) Service provided under subcontract to YMCA and Open Door Group through the Employment Program of BC

## Services provided

- Over the 2014-15 fiscal year – we had 64 referrals and served 61 clients.
- The model, procedures, processes and potential maximum aggregate funding amounts have now changed ten times since the EPBC inception in April of 2012.
- Presently, we offer a range of services from 1 to 1 counselling to group work including counseling, healing, life skills and employment readiness. We deliver these workshops based on our SOWINS model of Awareness, Acknowledgement and Action. Clients are encouraged to attend as many days as possible to increase the richness of their experience.
- Workshops on Recognizing, Understanding and Overcoming the Impacts of Abuse as well as general life skills – communications, assertion, boundaries, anger/stress and time management. Informational workshops on substance abuse, dressing for success, self-awareness and tenancy information combine with those on Critical thinking skills, including learning continuously, goal setting and problem solving, as well as those that encourage teamwork and build self-esteem, to round out the menu of activities.
- While women are participating in the program we often refer and link them to other services in the community - legal, medical and mental health services etc
- We provide workshops using a 6 week continually revolving schedule (with

occasional breaks between groups) as well as personal 1-to-1 counselling

## System of service delivery

Coordinator /Facilitator/ Counsellor	Brenda Wasnock	32 hours per week
Counsellor	Rhea Redivo	11 hours per week
Facilitator	Donna Burtwell	7 hours per week
New Admin Worker	Donna Burtwell	7 hours per week
New Coordinator	Priscilla Healey	25 hours per week

- The Specialized Services office and workshop room is located at #303--246 Martin Street, Penticton 8:30 to 4:30 M-F
- At present, Workshops are provided in six week blocks - Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 3:00 with an hour off for lunch
- As of this writing – May 15, 2015 - Intakes, assessments, referrals, linkages, revamping plans and file entries are all achieved after class Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or throughout the day Fridays.
- One to ones are handled on Mondays with Rhea, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday late afternoons with Brenda and Friday mornings with Rhea.

## More changes in the wind

In 2014, for the Annual Report, I wrote, "Having just completed preparing documents and data for the most recent changes to the EPBC, I have just heard that we will be meeting to discuss a new payment model very

soon - Hoping for a model much closer to block funding to come in the near future” .

Note: We were successful in moving to a block funded model from the YMCA and have found it to be much better for the clients, the Coordination of the services and for SOWINS fiscally.

Moving into this fiscal year, it seems as though the EPBC Program is finally starting to run smoothly. Province wide problems with the ICM software, the EPBC model, the policies and the referral processes have plagued EPBC for 3 years. Now it feels much better (more effective and efficient) and although we still have two different models of delivery with our two prime Contractors (YMCA and ODG), we provide excellent services to clients and remain fiscally viable. It would still be a goal of ours to extend the length of the workshop series – 8 weeks would be ideal and we could add back some of the workshops that, as a result of Government changes) have been dropped since we had to move away from the Bridging 12 week model in 2012.

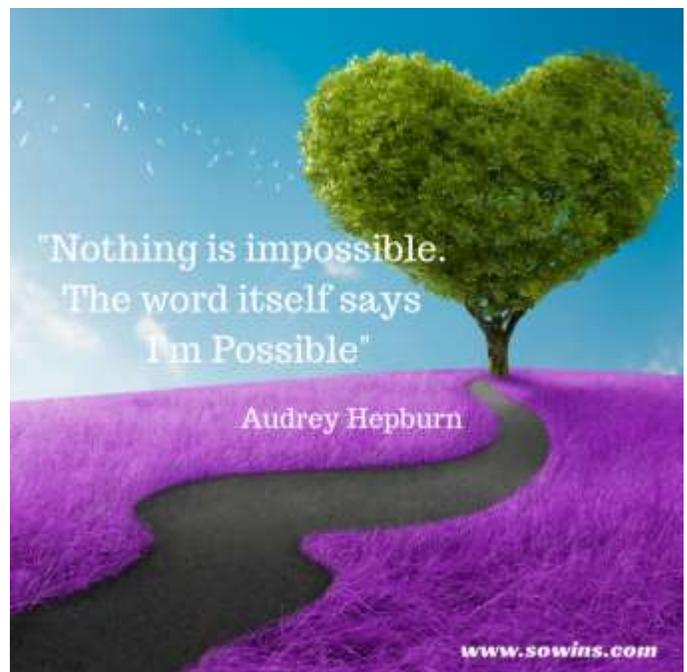
### Results:

Healing, along with higher self-esteem and confidence, increased energy, better health, self-care and communication skills, are the direct results of these services. Some women are moving on to employment, others have been able to go to go back to school, go to needed treatment, have in-depth assessments completed to address their mental or physical health issues, and still others have been able to complete their PWD applications with the help of the access centre.

### Special recognition:

Staff who have covered holidays / volunteers / practicum students

- Occasionally we have had a need for coverage when the Coordinator has been on vacation or needed sick time. Over the past couple of years I have been lucky to have Deb Maliepaard, Irene Jacobowski and Priscilla Healey provide coverage. Thank you
- Our weekly volunteer Delores has been an incredible asset. Her commitment to 3 hours every Tuesday is very much appreciated. Delores keeps all the curriculum materials, sign in sheets and file preparation ready for us.
- Donna Burtwell is completing her professional Counselling course this June. She has been an amazing asset throughout the past full year – Since April of 2014 Donna has been volunteering 1 to 3 days per week every week, completing her numerous required practicum hours, applying for and obtaining the 7 hour Facilitation position and now just recently obtaining the 7 hour admin position.



- We have just finished working with 2 practicum students from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year BSW Program at UVIC and one from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year Human Service Worker program at Okanagan College – all of these students were exceptional and seemed to enjoy their immersion in SOWINS – from

workshops to Transition House they all learned a great deal.

- Students always bring energy and enthusiasm with them while enriching the program. **A special thank you to all of them!**

---

## Community Outreach Program ~ Val McKinnon, Coordinator & Counselor

Provided under Contract to BC Ministry of Justice - Victims Services & Crime Prevention Program  
one staff 19 hours/week with an extra 2 hours/week funded by SOWINS

Community Outreach provides services to adult women who have experienced, or are at risk of abuse, threats, or violence.

Services include: information; advocacy; supportive counselling; support and accompaniment in family court system, community and government agencies; and drop in counselling to residents of SOWINS service area.

I see an average of 25 clients per month, over 300 clients this year, and provide an average of 100 plus services each month. Women are referred from the Transition House and other SOWINS' programs, South Okanagan Victim's Assistance (SOVAS), Penticton and Area Access Centre, Mental Health, Interior Health and the Multicultural Society, as well as provincial ministries.

Twenty-one hours per week allows us to provide services to women navigating the legal system. One on one information sessions are provided, as well as court accompaniment, support in accessing Legal Aid, Duty Counsel and other services as necessary. I can also assist women with applications for Housing, Ministry of Employment and Development, Immigration, and other Community Agency applications/referrals.

This program endeavors to meet a woman

*In March I met a young woman whom was brought to SOWINS by a friend who used our services in the past. This young gal had been taken to her male friend's party house and sexually assaulted by a number of the male partiers. She had not reported the incident at the time because she believed due to her use of alcohol she would not be believed. I was able to assist her in making an informed decision about a police report, as well as referring her to Pathways so she could look at her lifestyle choices. She is now in recovery and has made a police report. During this time her partner left her and her daughter in an expensive rental they could ill afford to pay for without his assistance. She was successfully referred to the Homeless Prevention Program for assistance while she looks for more affordable housing. She continues to meet with me and I enjoy assisting and watching her as she grows to be the woman she was meant to be.*

where she is at and to assist by providing information and education so she can make informed decisions that will best meet her needs. I enjoy being a part of the Outreach team and working together to provide our clients with the best possible service. This position offers me challenges that inspire growth and empowerment thus motivating effective change. I have provided booths to promote SOWINS at various community events.

### Future Program Effectiveness

Since beginning to work in this position last July, I have noticed the women in the South Okanagan are in need of more support and so am working to provide this to women living in the surrounding areas – Summerland, Oliver, Osoyoos and Keremeos. I plan to spend a few hours each month in these towns in hopes we can

successfully connect with the women requiring our support.

Community Outreach continues to have the privilege of retired family law lawyer Robert Mayne coming to SOWINS to provide mentoring to women dealing with family law matters.

---

## Children Who Witness Abuse Program ~ Erica Markus-Pawliuk, Acting Coordinator & Counsellor Provided Under Contract to BC Ministry of Justice - Victims Services & Crime Prevention Program

The mandate of the CWWA Program is to stop the intergenerational cycle of Violence. Through play, art, games, as well as other resources we provide education and support to children and their families on various issues they may be facing in their homes. Many children we support are coping with divorce and separation, anger, self-esteem, bullying and depression.

Our program supports the individual child as well as provides support for their families. We will meet with the parent or guardian and help them understand how violence has affected their children and give resources to support them in their parenting.

Housing for families is still a huge issue in our community and we have also seen a rise in youth dealing with homelessness and living on the streets. We hoping to continue to work with other community agencies to support our youth so they do not have to be living in such dangerous and vulnerable situations.

We have again facilitated the VIP (Violence is Preventable) Program at two elementary schools. This program teaches children about

feelings, anger, and self-esteem as well as how to manage their feels through various relaxation tools. We have also had the opportunity to go into the classrooms and give presentations on friendship and teaching children about how words impact their relationships.

We have also given a number of presentations to various community partners on the CWWA Program. We have also had the opportunity to attend two different Strong Start Programs to explain the CWWA program to parents of very young children so that they understand early on how abuse affects their children.

Finally, I would like to thank the volunteers who have helped us throughout the year. Their assistance in invaluable and very much appreciated.



## **Mature Women's Program** ~ for Kimanna Banfield, Mature

**Women's Support Worker and Counselor** Provided under contract to BC Housing – Women's Transition Housing & Support Program

During this last fiscal year Mature Women's Program has grown and changed as programs do as each woman brings to light something new to the program.

I have been facilitating a group of mature women for over a year and found that many of the women were no longer at risk of abuse. Many were strong, able and living independently. The group facilitated a strong sense of belonging and support however important, was not within my mandate so it was decided that we would close the group and refer the women on to other drop in groups.

Without group I had the opportunity to focus on the mature women who were still living with abuse and/or trying to overcome the impact of abuse. I was able to provide support, visits to the hospital, and referrals to those utilizing our program for the first time.

Throughout this fiscal year I received 119 new referrals. Many were self-referred, though many were referred by hospital, physicians, other community agencies, and family members. Of the 119 new referrals 62 were for direct abuse issues, 25 for homelessness, 28 for legal matters and 4 for other matters.

I provided 291 individual counselling and support sessions. I had provided 141 group sessions and 37 outreach services such as accompaniment, advocacy and transportation.

Though every woman's story is her own and impactful in its' own way there have been a few that I have been privileged to hear. One is a story where a woman who was abused from a young age by a family member, leaves home only to be further abused and eventually institutionalized where they conducted experimental dentistry work without any freezing. Today this woman experiences terror when facing a dentist's chair so her teeth are in very poor health placing her overall health at great risk. By advocating and working with QUOTA and HECK, we were able to assist this women in getting the dental work done while under a general anesthetic. Having the extractions done, new teeth in, will offer this woman a new life with a new smile and on the road to a great healthy future.

This is why we do what we do here at SOWINS and so honour the women who share their stories and pain with us.



# Women's Outreach Program ~ Sheila Robertson, Outreach

Counselor Provided under contract to BC Housing – Women's Transition Housing & Support Program

## Services Provided

Individual Counseling; Disability Applications  
Information About Abuse; Assistance  
completing other applications/forms  
Safety Planning; Information about other  
programs; Advocacy; Referrals

Each month the Women's Outreach program receives an average of **15 requests for help**. These requests for help are most often made directly by the woman, either by phone, email or by dropping by the office. Referrals also come from the community. I respond to each request for help usually the day I receive it.

Each month I have about **50 appointments with 35 - 45 individual women**. Most women only require short term support however there are some women who require long term help. Long term support is required for women who have many complex issues to deal with. It is also necessary for women having difficulties ending the cycle of violence in their life. These women are struggling to leave an abusive relationship or they may experience multiple abusive relationships. For example one woman I had appointments with in 2014 left her abusive husband over 12 years ago. Since then she has been in many other abusive relationships the last one being more violent than all the others.

The Outreach program is also responsible for coordinating the Christmas hamper program called **Share The Spirit**. We work with community partners to provide food hampers to families who have used the services of SOWINS in the past year. In 2014 over **150 families benefited** from this program.

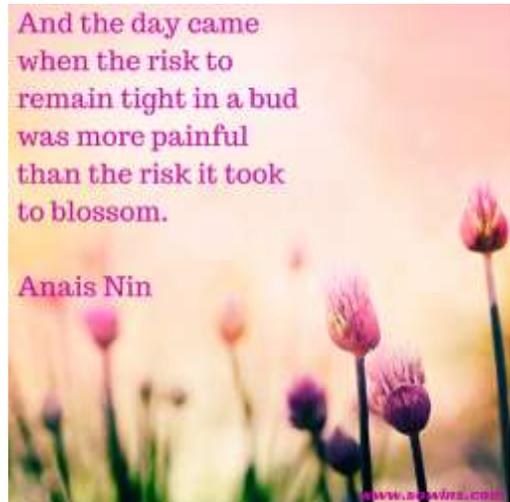
The following are issues of concern for me in helping women leave and overcome abuse.

Safe affordable housing is a serious problem for a number of the women. The new Homeless Prevention Program is making a real difference. Two women from the Outreach program have been able to move into safe secure permanent housing thanks to this program. However I would like to encourage SOWINS to lobby the government for more financial assistance and to continue to try to secure funding for second stage housing.

Another type of support that I feel would be very beneficial would be to offer a full time intensive holistic 6 week program for women who have experienced abuse. The process of meeting women several times each month is not enough help for some.

I also think we need to start talking more openly about mothers who abuse their children. In my 21 years at SOWINS many women have spoken to me about this. They have significant problems coming to terms with this type of abuse. Currently I have 10 women who have been significantly impacted by this.

Thank you to all SOWINS staff for all the great work you do and a thank you to the board and volunteers for all your work and dedication.



And the day came  
when the risk to  
remain tight in a bud  
was more painful  
than the risk it took  
to blossom.

Anais Nin

[www.sowins.com](http://www.sowins.com)

# Transition House Program ~ **Women's Support and Family**

**Support Teams** Provided under contract to BC Housing – Women's Transition Housing & Support Program

This last fiscal year has been a year of change for our organization and programs. SOWINS saw our long time executive director Eleanor retire and within a month welcomed Debbie to the position. We had a valuable long time staff member go off on leave due to a serious illness.

Our Transition House Manager moved over to Administration to become Director of Programs. Our housekeeper position was put on hold so that we can redevelop it to its original purpose. SUMAC, a program we were all trying to adapt to and failing, was cancelled. Change was in the air.

Our Family Support Workers advocated tirelessly to convert the spacious upstairs to a Children and Family Resource / Playroom. The large soaker tub was cut and taken out. The area for painting and water play was tiled. The bathroom in that area was converted to be totally child friendly.



Furniture in the play area is now for little people including their own reading chairs and matching ottomans. The children have a kitchen, reading area, play area, water and paint area to mention a few. This is where the staff work with the moms and their children on healthy parenting, play and healthy discipline.

Our Women Support Workers worked nonstop to move the offices around so that there was an office on every floor. With the new offices the women and children could access a staff member easily no matter what floor they were on. The top floor Children and Family Resource / Playroom has the Family Support Worker's office. The main living area off the kitchen, dining and living room area, is where the Women Support Worker's office took shape. There has been some painting done with more to come. The residents have said over and over again how much they LOVE where the staff are now. Our Safe Home Coordinator's office is on the lower floor. This office is a shared space and is next to what we are hoping to



become our Youth Bed for young women 18 years of age and younger that have no safe place to stay. SOWINS is working with the Ministry for Children and Family Development on funding for this bed. Youth Engagement Strategy YES, is also involved in seeing this bed come to be.

We have formed a scheduling committee that works to ensure that the House is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is a committee of three that work hard and have completed a staff schedule for the next year! The committee was formed when our House Manager moved over to Administration. The committee also makes sure that seniority is kept track of and call in procedure is followed due to our collective agreement.

Our next big project is to redo all six of the bedrooms. Our practicum students designed all six with new colours and bedding to brighten each room. We have already had the holes patched and are just waiting to paint. The problem being is that we don't have any vacant bedrooms so that we can paint them but we will get them done soon! We have also decided that without WINGS thrift store that we are going to try a small free store here at the House. We are having one of the newly renovated tiny rooms installed with shelving so that the women and children can pick through and pick out clothing for free. This will be maintained by staff.

Our residents the women and children we serve, have told us they love all the change. We continue to be a House that is client centred and anti-oppressive in our practices. We know we have saved lives; women that have told us that if they hadn't stayed with us, they would likely be dead. Every day

each of us come into work hoping that we can make a positive difference for the women and children that access our House. Every day we put aside any negative stuff that may be going on in our own lives, to work effectively and give of ourselves – to the women and children in the house. The women and children tell us that they love our House and they appreciate us so much. We love our House and we appreciate every woman and child that accesses our services so we have the opportunity to make a difference. Over the past year there has been some terrific moments of learning for the Transition house staff, to adapt to change in procedure and policy and to build and broaden our individual strengths and wisdom. The team has taken on more responsibility in the management of the house, in making decisions involving best practises, that allow for client centered healing and continuum of supportive services.



The Transition House has provided supportive services to 1001 women and 186 children. Many of the women and children the TH provides services and supports to have, multiple barriers and concerns they are trying to challenge and overcome, in addition to securing safe and affordable

housing. Having the opportunity to assist women and children in moving forward to achieve their personal goals, is a privilege the staff at the TH welcome.

**One Resident's Story:** *A woman came into the house who had been in an extremely abusive relationship since she was in her mid-teens. The woman and her partner had 6 children. Since the woman has come into the house she has found her voice, in learning how to set boundaries, understanding her experience, and overcoming some of her barriers. This woman has started to rebuild relationships with her two eldest children that her partner isolated her from. The woman has had first time experiences of socializing and making decisions for herself. She continues to work with local agencies in order to safely house herself, with a longer term goal of gaining access and custody of her younger children.*

---

## Safe Home Program ~ Priscilla Healey Coordinator Provided under contract to BC Housing – Women's Transition Housing & Support Program

Over the last year the Safe Home program has blossomed. The Safe Home Coordinator works closely with both the Volunteer Coordinator and the Transition House staff to provide alternative temporary housing for women and recently children fleeing abuse.

Safe Homes are a valuable alternative to the Transition House for women who may not be a good fit for communal living, have mobility issues, and/or the Transition House is a maximum capacity. There are currently 3 active (Summerland, Oliver, and Penticton country side) and 1 inactive (Karameros) safe homes in the South Okanagan.

All of the safe homes operators have completed (or are in the process of completing) the BC Transition Houses 'Foundations in Violence Against Women' online training. We currently have 1 safe home that welcomes and is equipped to

provide a safe space for a woman and up to 3 children.

We are actively recruiting new safe homes throughout the South Okanagan. Ideally we would like to have at least 3 safe homes in the Penticton, 2 in Summerland, 1 in Osoyoos, 1 in Okanagan Falls, 1 in Oliver, and 1 in Keremeos, although we are not limited to these numbers. We are also looking for a safe home that would be willing to house a woman with her pet, as pets can provide solace and a sense of safety. We are currently in talks with 2 potential safe homes in the Penticton area.

Due to the nature of the work there is a careful screening process that takes place, and not everyone who expresses interest in becoming a safe home operator is an appropriate fit. In these cases we work with the volunteer coordinator to find other ways that they can help out at SOWINS.

# Homeless Prevention Program ~ Judith Rackham, temporary Homeless Prevention worker

Provided under Contract to BC Housing

In January 2015, SOWINS was awarded the opportunity to be one of two agencies able to administer the Homeless Prevention Program. This service offers short term financial assistance to woman who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence and concurrently, are homeless or are at risk of being so.

The worker involved follows a process which involves the initial process of examining the client's level of need and whether she meets the above described mandate. The application forms need to be completed and a case plan developed. Before the process is able to advance the woman needs to find appropriate housing. This is often a challenge in light of their being few units available within the lower price range. The Homeless Prevention Worker will refer where possible to appropriate housing options within the community.

When the client has secured housing it then becomes necessary to formulate a plan which addresses the nature of the goals she wishes to meet within the six month period. The importance of this stage cannot be underrated since the ultimate goal is that she will be able to continue to maintain stability after the program ends. The supplement allows time for the client to either increase income, or decrease the living costs, which allows for a smooth continuance of a financially viable lifestyle. Success of the program for all concerned, the provider (BC Housing ), the administrator (SOWINS ), and the client, is based on her ability to remain housed after the six month period. Throughout the six month period,



the client meets with the worker at least twice per month in order to assess how the goals are progressing. The contact allows for a degree of accountability on behalf of all parties. It also serves to keep the client's goal plan at the forefront.

Currently the program has three clients who will have, in July, received the full six months of support. The worker will meet with the client in the month following in order to ascertain the success of the assistance. This will include examining whether the goals have been met.

On an ongoing basis, the Homeless Prevention Worker will enter client information into the database provided by BC Housing. This is an important requirement in terms of achieving the continuance of funding from BC Housing.

All in all the program has achieved the expected popularity. As a worker it has been a pleasure to be able to assist in a very tangible way.

## Human Resources ~ Sharon Morrow, Administration & Human Resources Manager

Our all-female staff are skilled and caring individuals who provide support and services to women and children who have experienced abuse. We not only fulfill the requirements of our contracts; we are committed to make a difference in the lives of our clients.

All of the achievements discussed in this Annual Report are made possible through the outstanding employees whose expertise, abilities and dedication make SOWINS the diversified support system that it is today. SOWINS is very proud to employ these women.

Our human resources numbers have remained static over the past year.

*Active employees at March 31, 2015:*

32 individuals; 12 full time of which 3 are on leave; 10 part time and 10 casual

---

### *Thanks for All The Soup by Debbie Scarborough*

I have been working in the anti-violence sector for many years and the abuse often presents the same in that the women are told by their abusers that they are worth nothing. That the women are stupid, ugly, dumb and no one would ever want them so to go ahead and leave. Those of us that work directly with the women and their children, tell them that they are wonderful and that they are smart however often they say, "you're supposed to say that" and they softly smile. Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers do a lot more than make soup. Not only are the individuals, organizations, businesses paying to make soup, chopping and making the soup, writing the personalized labels, they are sending a very clear message that we love to share with the women and children. We can hand them the soup and say with confidence that the abuser is wrong; that in fact there are many individuals and community members that think, worry about and wish the very best, for them. These people, not just us, believe that everyone has the right to live their lives

without fear. Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers is not just about the soup. It is more than caring, it is about saving lives when people start believing that they are worthy of life free of fear and that they are not dumb, stupid and ugly. So while Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers pay, chop, cook and write, we hand the soup to the women and tell them someone paid to make this for you because they care about you – know that you have changed a life.

Thank you Soup Sisters and Broth Brothers and all those supporters in Penticton BC!



## Reflections on Abuse by Hailey Sargeant

Domestic violence is like a dark closet you have been kept in, but you can't shed any light if you can't open the doors and walk out.

It makes you feel worthless and you want to cry out for help to scream from the rooftops that you're living with a monster, but you're scared and you feel like it's your fault, maybe you deserved it, maybe you did something. You think you can fix them, help them and maybe you can, but it is worth it to try, to endure the pain and abuse?

If we were to apply the numbers we see in domestic violence to terrorism or gang violence, the entire country would be up in arms. We would be freaking out because it's scary, it affects the way we feel.

Terrorism make us feel unsafe, makes us want to run inside, lock the doors and never come out, but what if "home" is scarier than what's outside? What if home was a place of sadness and heartache? We can't just assume that everything is okay in our friend's and even our family's lives just because they're too afraid to speak up.

On average 6 out of 10 people have suffered domestic violence. Today you will have walked by at least one person who has been abused. You may have walked past them on the street or sat beside them in class. People build walls.

67.2% is the percentage of all Canadians that say they personally know at least one woman who has been sexually or physically abused. 88% of all police reported

domestic assaults are against women. On average every six days a woman is killed by her domestic partner, but we seem to forget about the 40% of domestic violence cases against men and the 13% of cases against teenagers in dating relationships. If you were to search "domestic violence" on the internet, the majority of articles would be about women.

The definition of domestic violence is "Violent or aggressive behavior within the home, typically involving the violent abuse of a spouse or partner". Nowhere in the definition does it state the age or gender qualifications for it to fall under domestic violence. Domestic violence happens, it happens to women, men and teenagers and just because it's most common to know a woman who has been abused, than a man or a child, it doesn't mean those cases can be swept under the carpet. We try our best to bring justice to those deserving but justice doesn't mean the right person goes to jail, it just means someone pays for the crime. Domestic violence causes far more pain than the visible marks of bruises and scars. It is devastating to be abused by someone that you love and thinks loves you in return. It's excruciatingly hard to sit there and take but even harder to leave. You want to leave, but it feels like you're giving up, like you've failed, but you're failing yourself if you accept that this is your reality. So look further than the surface, because we suffer and sometimes just need someone to look a little deeper. To hear our silent cries for help. We need to learn to read between the lines.