

# ALBERT COUNCIL of WOMEN'S SHELTERS

## ACWS 1995-96 HIGHLIGHTS

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1995-96 was a very demanding year for the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. Advances were made by way of positioning briefs regarding the designation of women's shelters to the Commissioner of Services to Children & Families, a brief on forced mediation, which was sent to all Justice for Family & Youth Law as well as Family Law Judges - Queen's Bench, a brief on Bill C-68 - Gun Control Legislation which was presented to the Senate of Canada - Legal and Constitutional Affairs, and numerous presentations throughout the province to increase awareness on family violence issues and sheltering in general. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters objectives remain:

- (a) To service as the collective, unified voice of member organizations.
- (b) To foster networking and information sharing.
- (c) To assist in acquiring adequate resources for member organizations and ACWS.
- (d) To influence public policy and systems.
- (e) To increase public awareness of issues related to family violence.
- (f) To foster professional development within Alberta's sheltering movement.

Committed to members, together with dedicated staff, contributed to the following activities:

### **Supporting members through research, education and resource development**

- ◆ completed a successful grant application to Status of Women Canada in order to initiate a Corporate Fund Raising Strategy to raise money for shelters and for ACWS
- ◆ implemented changes to the administration of the ACWS Group Benefits Plan as well as adding increased benefits and two more shelters bringing the total to nine (9) participating member shelters
- ◆ held IODE Child Support Workshop for shelter child care staff addressing several topics including: "Children & HIV, Effects of Substance Abuse, Cultural Issues, Peace Through Play, and Attention Deficient Disorder"
- ◆ directors conference to be held in June 96, addressing "Rights and Responsibilities around Unionization", using the Media Pro-Actively (Media Survival Guide) and Legalities of Hiring and Firing
- ◆ working in partnership with the AACA Women's Treatment Program on the dissemination on the "Link Educational Package" (ongoing)
- ◆ designed and printed a new ACWS brochure
- ◆ produced a Fall 1995 and a Spring 1996 ACWS Newsletter
- ◆ applied for a third ACWS casino. The November 1995 Casino brought \$29,000.00 to ACWS and allowed for the purchase of new and updated computer equipment

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- ◆ supported individual shelters addressing local issues and challenges
- ◆ attended, with funding support from The Senate of Canada, a meeting with the Senators to argue and support stricter Gun Control Legislation. The new legislation Bill C-68 became law in the Spring of 1996
- ◆ was successful in obtaining a program grant from Status of Women Canada for the continuation of the Council
- ◆ participating on a National Committee to establish a mandate for issues regarding National Response to family violence and its affects (ongoing)

## **Working with Government**

- ◆ met with Matt Hanrahan and Jane Holliday to discuss adding increased flexibility to the existing Shelter Model
- ◆ met with Mike Cardinal, Minister of Alberta Family & Social Services to discuss the issues of Women's Shelters and the Commissioner of Services to Children & Families, to ask for designated funding for women's shelters and to provide information on the programs and services Alberta Shelters provide, to ask that we be recognized as an essential service, and to stress that over 25% of abused women do not have children
- ◆ participated with Alberta Justice in a 3-day training program for members of police services, crown prosecutors and probation officers
- ◆ presenting information and training on family violence to the Edmonton component of Provincial and Federal employees with Corrections Canada and Probation in order to extend the Calgary Training Initiative - "Probation Officer Training Project" - to Edmonton
- ◆ consultation with Alberta Justice and Crown Prosecutors on the accessibility and effectiveness of Restraining Orders, Peace Bonds, and No-Contact Orders. Stressed the need to have a system in place to track sentencing patterns in Domestic Violence cases
- ◆ consultation with Status of Women Canada as to the success of their program and the availability of ongoing funding for women's organizations throughout the country
- ◆ consultation with Minister Allan Rock on the changes to maintenance payments as pertaining to Revenue Canada
- ◆ participated on the Family Violence Policing Initiatives Advisory Committee, Alberta Justice (ongoing)

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## **Building and Maintaining Partnerships**

- ◆ consulting and participation with The Action Committee (Immigrant Women Against Family Violence) to address issues pertaining to the Immigrant Communities (ongoing)
  - consulting with Canada Immigration to include information on family violence to new arrivals
  - working with and training faith leaders from 26 denominations on issues of family violence
  - developing protocols with Social Services on questionnaires to assist victims of family violence
- ◆ participation at the Inter Agency Meeting for information sharing and network with agencies involved with spousal abuse
- ◆ working with the Canadian Bar Association on identifying pertinent legal issues facing women leaving an abusive partner
- ◆ **participation on the Pro-Bono Legal Committee**
- ◆ participated in the Coalition of Provincial Human Service Organizations

## **Other Highlights**

Media attention to sheltering issues has continued to be high. ACWS representatives have been regularly in contact with media from across the province and beyond including:

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|----------------------------|--------------------|
| - The Edmonton Journal     | - The Edmonton Sun |
| - Calgary Herald           | - Vis-A-Vis        |
| - The Calgary Sun          | - K97 Radio        |
| - CBC Radio and Television | - K96 Radio        |
| - CBC French News          | - CFCW             |
| - CISN 103 FM              | - CKUA Calgary     |
| - CHQT                     |                    |

Media issues receiving the most attention this year have been the “Decentralization of Services”, Women’s Shelter Funding, Murders of Women in Calgary, changes to legislation, including: gun control, intoxication, maintenance, child welfare, closure of AACWI, cuts to our social programs and the affects on women and children.

A variety of groups across the province consulted with us regarding the establishment of shelters, satellites or family violence prevention programs in their communities.

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Provincial Coordinator was invited to write an article on our Project 96 - Corporate Awareness and Fund Raising Initiatives for Vis-A-Vis.

Full Council meetings were held in June '95, September '95, and March '96. The Executive Committee met at these times as well.

## **Achievements**

The collaborative working relationship between ACWS, the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Minister of Alberta Family and Social Services is unique and works to the advantage of all concerned. ACWS has worked closely with the Department to develop protocols between Shelter staff and department staff both with S.F.I. and Child Welfare issues. We are currently working on solving problems with Emergency Social Services to better serve the needs of abused women and their children. There is still much work to do to achieve recognition of the requirements of shelters at the political level to ensure that we can continue to provide safety and support to victims of abuse.

The "What Went Right" project is near completion. We expect to have the report by the end of June, 1996.