



Final Report

to

Canadian Women's Foundation

1ST WORLD CONFERENCE
OF WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Discovering the
Common Core
PRACTICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR CHANGE



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Summary:

From September 8 -11, 2008 over 800 delegates representing 51 countries gathered in Edmonton Alberta to meet, support and learn from a global community of shelter workers and shelter organizations.

The presentations delivered included information on:

- Shelter Best Practices
- Shelter Sustainability
- Trafficking in Women
- Children Exposed to Family Violence
- Batterer's Interventions
- Indigenous Women's Issues and Work
- Staff Wellness
- What Men Can Do to End Violence Against Women and Children (Pre-Conference event and workshops)

Work leading up to the implementation of the world conference was intense. ACWS was able to recruit 10 university students through a Community Service Learning (CSL) program to help with the initial research in locating and contacting shelters from around the world as, prior to the conference, no such list existed.

A website, www.womenshelter.ca, was set up which allowed interested individuals and agencies to add their names to the growing database. The call for abstracts was posted on the website and distributed through the database. The website also highlighted the conference agenda, the location and venue, ideas for funding and, eventually, an online registration process. All of this helped us to maintain a fairly paperless conference.

Over 320 abstracts were submitted for consideration from which 124 were chosen. Our agenda was determined based on the abstracts chosen. A handful of keynote speakers were contacted and contracted but for the most part the keynotes were chosen from amongst the submitted presentations. Delegates were also invited to submit on-line resources for sharing at the Internet Café on-site and to share print resources at tables during coffee breaks. Each delegate was provided with a memory stick to download information from the Internet Café and from the website post conference.

ACWS organized other special events and on-site activities including an international poster display and outdoor wellness sessions.

Over 80 volunteers from the community helped on-site to set-up, register, and provide support for delegates during their visit. Volunteers were invaluable in facilitating conference workshops, providing conference summaries, distributing and collecting evaluations and providing security.

521 Canadian delegates attended. 52 Canadian speakers showcased their work, their research and their ideas. **We are very grateful for the support of the Canadian Women's Foundation for providing funding that assisted the attendance of Canadian women's shelters and allowed us to deliver a program full of content that was rich and diverse.**

Delegates were energized, filled with hope and a renewed sense of purpose and have returned to their communities with new contacts, new ideas and information that they have already begun to pass along to their boards, their staff and their communities.

The support of The Canadian Women's Foundation was acknowledged in the following way:

On site:

- Screen loop with CWF logo at Opening ceremony
- Screen loop with CWF logo at Cultural event
- Screen loop with CWF logo at Closing Ceremony
- Screen loop with CWF logo on multiple occasions during other conference plenary sessions
- Verbal acknowledgement at Opening Ceremony
- Verbal acknowledgment at Closing Ceremony
- CWF Logo in Conference Program

Post Conference:

- CWF Logo on Sponsor Thank you page on Conference website at www.womenshelter.ca
- CWF logo and thank you in ACWS fall/winter newsletter (distribution 3500)

1. What have been the highlights of the project?

- The highlight of the project was the feedback from delegates who have been overwhelming in expressing the sentiment that: ***[they] went home inspired, having fed [their] souls.***
- The spontaneous meetings of national, international and special interest groups that sprung up as a result of the project
- The expected and the unexpected outcomes

2. Did your work unfold as planned?

Yes the conference unfolded as planned.

3. Any surprises? Changes? Disappointments? How did you handle them?

We were surprised by the number of people who desperately tried to enter Canada by registering from the Conference. It is a reminder of the good fortune of Canadians. Our protocol was to require proper identification for payment and registration if we had questions about legitimacy.

There were delegates who found themselves overwhelmed by the sometimes grim stories that are always part of the domestic violence picture. ACWS comforted and visited with those delegates to reassure them and offer them hope for the future.

4. Total number of participants & total number of hours of service per participant.

809 delegates representing 51 countries attended the first World Conference of Women's Shelters. Delegates received 19.5 hours of workshop training plus an additional 5.5 hours for those who attended the pre-conference day

5. Comment on the progress of the participants in the program.

Summary of conference evaluations indicated a high level of success as shown by the following ratings (aggregate total out of 5

- An increased sense of empowerment and solidarity in stopping violence. **4.7**
- An enhanced capacity to be a voice for change on a policy level. **4.2**
- Increased knowledge on building collaborative models for violence interventions. **4.2**
- An opportunity to share my experience and/or research. **4.1**
- A growing network of shelter associations and global partnerships. **4.5**
- The means to link into a community of practice so that learning can be shared. **4.2**
- An increased knowledge of the role of men and women in domestic violence. **4.1**
- Ways to engage men in my community. **3.9**
- Male risk factors for family violence. **3.8**
- Male protective factors for family violence. **3.7**
- Actions men can take to reduce family violence. **4.1**
- Print materials. **4.3**
- World Conference website. **4.3**
- Translation services. **4.4**
- Rate your overall satisfaction with the Breakfast with the Guys: Men's leadership. **4.7**
- Rate your overall satisfaction with the Opening Reception and Ceremonies. **4.6**
- Rate your overall satisfaction with the Gala Dinner. **4.7**
- Rate the extent to which the daily Wellness Sessions were useful to you. **4.0**
- Pre-conference communication with the World Conference organizers (CEO). **4.0**
- On-site registration. **4.6**
- World Conference venue (accessibility, appropriateness, cleanliness, etc. **4.7**
- Catering service. **4.2**
- Assistance provided on-site (ease of navigation, volunteers, etc.) **4.5**
- Opportunity to network with shelter delegates. **4.4**
- Rate your overall satisfaction with the World Conference. **4.7**
- I included a Canadian shelter visit(s) as part of my travel plans. **10% of respondents visited a Canadian shelter.**

Are there any surprises? We were pleasantly surprised by the unanimously positive feedback.

6. Are there any new issues emerging that are impacting the participants' development of skills, competency and confidence?

Shelters felt a sense of solidarity and empowerment in having a forum for their voices to be heard. Knowing that the same issues are experienced around the world and they are not alone in working towards positive change renewed their sense of purpose.

Shelters from developing nations reported: (aggregate total out of 5)

- The degree to which you feel you have gained a network of front-line workers from around the world with which to connect on an ongoing basis. **4.3**
- The degree to which you feel you have gained a more complete understanding of the global picture of domestic violence **4.9**
- The degree to which you feel your participation in the World Conference has enabled you to improve the sheltering services in your home country **4.5**

Delegates discovered the possibilities that emerged from having a unified voice including: global data collection, possible national and international networks, collaborative research.

In fact, 11 Alberta Shelters will participate in an ACWS research project called ***Practical Frameworks for Change (PFC)*** that will track the results of implementing 3 best practices learned at the Conference. Pilot shelters will review and implement 3 innovative programs in the areas of Safety, Health and Cultural Competence. Results of these programs will be determined through the direct response from shelter clients and will address the need to establish a standardized set of best practices across Alberta shelters.

The standardization of these practices will result in a higher level of service throughout provincial emergency shelters. Finally, ACWS will compile the results of the project in order to share findings with national and international shelter networks. The project, therefore, will affect the experiences of women in shelters across the country and around the world.

7. How have participants been involved in decision making for the program?

A call for abstracts initiated an overwhelming response of 320 submissions. From those, 124 were chosen which provided the program; the participants were the presenters. A selection committee reviewed, graded and chose the abstracts based on pre-determined criteria which allowed for international representation.

Delegates have now been invited to participate in an international advisory committee that will take a look at:

- Hosting the next world conference
- Global data collection
- International Community of Practice

8. Provide a few anecdotes/stories from the participants who took part in your project that you think best illustrate its impact.

The following comments from a delegate best describe the common experience:

Let's hope this conference marks a watershed in terms of major advances on a global scale in the fight against violence against women, human trafficking, prostitution and pornography. Thank you for making it possible to see first hand what a global pandemic violence against women is. 801 delegates with the same message, 51 countries with the same message... I feel educated, agitated, and ready to organize and mobilize in the struggle to end violence in our society.

In other words, I feel empowered with knowledge and am ready to "step up to the plate" to assist in bringing about fundamental change that will benefit women, children and front line shelter workers. Together with our brothers I am hopeful we can educate all people on this pandemic and move mountains or shall we say governments to have the political will to effect change.

Again, kudos... [to ACWS], the Board, the staff and the volunteers for providing me and all the other delegates with an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

At the Closing ceremony, on the last day of the Conference, a spontaneous group representing almost every country, led the audience in a song of inspiration and then in their own languages offered words of thanks and a wish for the future. It was very moving and expressed the feelings of all delegates that they were in this together and were not working alone to solve domestic violence.

9. Please use your original budget as a guide and show budgeted versus actual expenses and revenues. (see attached)

Other: If applicable, provide any media coverage about your program.

Please visit the conference website at www.womenshelter.ca.

Click on the Media tab to view media coverage.

Click on Gallery tab to view photos.