



Remarks by Jan Reimer at the ACWS Outcomes Conference

September 19th, 2018

Good morning everyone, I'm so very glad to be here with you all this morning.

Welcome to the ACWS Outcomes Conference. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the traditional territories of the Cree and the people of the Treaty 6. Edmonton is also home to Metis Nation of Alberta, Region 4.

Our Elder this morning is Hazel McKennit, a Metis knowledge keeper and an educator for over twenty years.

I'd like to invite her to start the meeting in a good way.

Thank you Hazel.

We are here this morning to discuss the question of outcomes. Over the next two days you will hear many interesting presentations offering a variety of perspectives on the value of outcome tracking.

I am particularly excited to welcome Steve Patty to Edmonton – I'm very much looking forward to listening to him and learning from him. I am also grateful to all of the other presenters including the team from PolicyWise and the staff from a variety of women's shelters who we will hear from tomorrow.

I would like to extend a note of sincere gratitude to the ACWS Training and Education Committee who have been so involved in creating the framework for

this conference. I also have to say a very special word of thanks to Catie Hickman our Education & Training Advisor who has been pivotal in taking our training programme to a new level and who has invested an enormous amount of care and thought in creating what I am certain will be a very successful event.

I'd like to begin our two days together with some observations on just how far we in the Alberta shelter movement have come in a comparatively short period of time.

I can clearly recall the days when all of our data for the provincial government was processed on paper cards which consumed all the space in our office... I think those cards were the source of at least some of these white hairs!

Thankfully, since then we have had some advances in technology.

Just a few years ago it would have been unimaginable for us to be able to operate at the level of sophistication and precision that we are now operating at.

Today the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and the shelter membership operates one of the largest and most complex social justice Big Data operations across all of Canada.

We have been able to do this because of a decision ten years ago to engage in collective data collection, data sharing and data analysis and, through the use of common technological tools.

The decision by the shelter movement to work collectively on data has had a range of positive impacts at a range of different levels:

Firstly, on an individual level:

In the shelter movement we pursue a women-centered approach. This means placing those facing violence and abuse at the heart of every decision we make and every service we offer. By doing this we dramatically increase the likelihood of creating successful outcomes because we can circumvent the – often invisible – gendered barriers. Using our technological systems to engage in Intensive Case Management and to support risk assessments and safety planning means that shelters have saved the lives of many women, children and seniors facing abuse.

Secondly, on a common practise level:

Through the collection of data by shelter staff, and the analysis of data we have been able to identify trends which inform our practices. This trend analysis –

combined with paying keen attention to contemporary research – has enabled shelters to engage in practices which are inclusive to a diverse range of women, which account for the specific needs of children and led to the development of trauma and violence informed approaches throughout every aspect of shelter service provision – all the while paying close attention to the issue of safety.

Through the use of the Danger Assessment Tool we have been able to assess the threats faced by women at an individual level but also to identify and to help women respond accordingly.

We have also analysed those threats at a societal level. Because of this we know that 73% of women entering second-stage shelters faced an extreme or severe danger of being murdered by their intimate partner.

We have also been able to identify common levels of impact – I know that later on this morning Ian will recount to you some of those details in his presentation on the power of data,

but I think it is worth emphasising that because of our collective data & research initiatives we can demonstrate that when entering second-stage shelters 17% of women had been living in stable housing but when leaving shelter 55% were moving in to stable housing.

This is remarkable for two reasons. Firstly, it shows an amazing impact in the lives of those women. But it is also a sophisticated piece of data to be able to collect involving the work of shelter staff as well as ACWS staff and external consultants.

Finally, on the level of systems and advocacy our collective work on data has had an enormous impact. Indeed, we would not be here today without it.

When presented with the data about the work of women's shelters then Leader of the Opposition Rachel Notely raised the issue in the Alberta Legislature. She followed up with a clear manifesto commitment to increase funding to women's shelters.

This commitment was delivered in 2015 and that funding has greatly enhanced the ability of shelters to operate effectively. It has also enhanced the work of ACWS to support the shelter network across the province. This Outcomes Conference is funded by Children and Social Services and through the

contributions of ACWS members to our training and education fund and we are very grateful for those contributions.

However, this three year funding bubble is now coming to an end for ACWS. With a close eye on the upcoming provincial budget and the elections we have been engaged in a tremendous effort to communicate to government the impact their funding has had on the lives of the thousands of people who have been touched by it. We will continue to work tirelessly to paint the picture of our collective success. I hope you enjoy your time with us and that you come away equipped with a new energy to paint the picture of your own successes.

Thank you.

This conference is the result of considerable effort by the ACWS Training and Education Committee. The Committee is comprised of a selection of member shelters who are working collaboratively to raise the professional standards of our sector.