



Background

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters is a registered charity, representing 41 women's emergency, second stage and senior's sheltering agencies across the province. These shelters are located in rural, urban and on reserve communities providing Albertan's from all walks of life with a continuum of services. We support the shelters with education and training, communications, public awareness, research, policy development and emergency funding. The result is informed and effective family violence interventions that keep women and children safe.

Additionally, ACWS is uniquely positioned in Alberta with contacts that span from local service delivery to global policy networks, such as the World Health Organization's Global Alliance for Violence Prevention. Nationally, we collaborate with other shelter networks (Canadian Association of Women's Shelters), think tanks relevant to family violence and centres of excellence, such as the London Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System (Ontario). Our experience has shown the value of networking and collaboration in producing real results.

In September 8-11, 2008, ACWS will host the first World Conference for Women's Shelters. *Discovering the Common Core: practical frameworks for change* will present a new opportunity for over 500 family violence prevention workers in Alberta and around the world to learn from international experts and each other.

Alberta shelters are well-positioned to showcase the work they do, share common concerns and improve world wide networking. Too often, women's shelter work is overlooked in discussions on family violence, when in reality they are at the forefront of dealing with this issue. This will increase the capacity of shelters in Alberta to affect change in their organizations and their communities to better meet the needs of ethno cultural, multicultural and racial communities when dealing with family violence.

One of the goals of our conference is to establish a communication strategy for continued collaboration and networking between shelters around the world. We will also collect and disseminate cross cultural data, best practices and resources through the website which will support communication between local and international delegates.

As a result, much needed, but currently unavailable, baseline data of shelter programs and best practices, worldwide, will be established. This will be shared

with women's organizations as well as the World Health Organization as they work to bring greater attention to violence issues.

The World Leader's Forum, scheduled for September 8th, offers an additional benefit. ACWS cannot overstate the need for men in leadership positions to identify themselves key players and motivators in violence prevention, and in particular family violence. Key male leader from around the world have been and are being contacted and we are pleased with the results to date.

We believe that *Discovering the Common Core* will highlight Alberta shelters and our partnering sponsors as emerging leaders in finding solutions to end violence against women and children. We would like to invite you to support us in connecting with the world and in connecting women's shelters around the world.