

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters

We are making a difference...

with one unified voice at a time.

Annual Report 2002-2003



We improve the lives of women and children...

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ACWS Members and Friends:

It has been a fantastic year for ACWS and its members! You should be so proud as we have accomplished many of our goals set forth by you in our strategic plan. I would like to share with you some important projects that were completed this year:

ACWS Strategic Goal: To build a responsive, well-resourced and proactive organization.

1. Redesign ACWS Logo & Newsletter (Completed)
2. Work plans designed for each Board Committee (Completed)
3. Obtain additional office support (Completed)
4. Successful Crisis Intervention Workshop & IODE Workshops (Completed with great feedback)
5. ACWS Board members sign code of conduct (Completed)
6. Committee policies & orientation procedures in place for new board (Completed)

ACWS Strategic Goal: User Friendly accessible information system.

7. Design & develop funding application for online database. (Completed - we have partnered with Canadian Outcomes Institute in this project.)
8. Assist shelters in obtaining the appropriate technology to implement the information system project. (In Progress – New computers are being funded through the generosity of the Muttart Foundation; Internet package negotiated with Telus; Province provided financial support).
9. Data sharing agreement between ACWS & shelters (In Progress; as of March 31, 28 shelters have signed)

ACWS Strategic Goal: Work with shelters to obtain stable, standardized, province wide core funding.

10. Participate in Minister's Shelter Review (Completed; membership agrees to advocate for a Family Violence Commission)
11. Develop a case for additional funding for ACWS and Shelters (Completed - Obtained funds from Status of Women Canada to update ACWS Compendium of Services and a shelter salary review; Presented to Standing Policy Committee in October, 2002. In December 2002, Minister Iris Evans adopts our recommendations for core shelter salaries and shelters received a funding *increase*).



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT continued

Strategic Goal: ACWS is recognized as a vehicle for social change.

12. Participate in Child Welfare Act Review (Completed—submitted brief and presented to the committee)
13. Memorandum of Understanding with RCMP & Province (Completed—Local Working Agreements are now being developed at the local level)
14. Respond to Supports For Independence Low Income Review, Completed—While we would love to see increases to the SFI rate, we were successful in making some policy changes for women leaving an abusive relationship)
15. Respond to Provincial Family Law Review on Custody & Access Issues (Completed—We have also met with the Minister of Justice (Alberta) and federal staff to discuss these issues)
16. Develop a strategy on Turn-aways from Shelters (Completed-ACWS is in discussions with the province to access funds for the 21 unfunded beds in locations where there is a high turn-away rate; designed tool to keep up to date statistics to monitor situation)

As you can see, as an organization we have achieved many of our goals and it is time to celebrate these successes. ACWS has been a strong leader in the family violence movement and we have worked hard with our partners to ensure there are appropriate services in the community.

On another note, it is with deep regret that I will not be running again for the position as President. The last six years experience with ACWS has been exceptional and I feel very honoured that I have had a chance to work with so many fantastic people from around the province. I believe the success of ACWS has been because of you, the Board members, volunteers, and frontline staff.

I especially would like to thank Jan and Flavia for their tireless effort in raising the profile of the shelter movement in Alberta. I would also like to thank all the board members and the executive directors who give so much of their time to advocate for the needs of women and children experiencing violence. In addition, I would like to thank Minister Iris Evans and her staff for championing ACWS issues within the provincial government. You are truly amazing people and I am lucky to have had a chance to get to know you and to work with you.

This has been the best experience in my volunteer career and I want to thank you for trusting me and allowing me to have this opportunity. I will be available to ensure a successful transition in leadership and will continue to support ACWS (forever).

Sincerely,

Lana Wells, President



We believe in empowerment for women and the equal worth of all persons...

MESSAGE FROM THE PROVINCIAL COORDINATOR

This year has been one of positive change at ACWS. In July 2002 we moved to Alex Taylor School, which gave us improved space, like-minded tenants, and IT support at less cost! We are extremely grateful to the Muttart Foundation for funding the Alex Taylor School Project and the Edmonton City Centre Church Corporation for being such a great landlord.

Our special request to Status of Women for funding to look at shelter salary issues was approved last May. Shelter workers and managers participated in surveys, interviews and spoke with a common voice! The report found that the primary issue facing women's shelters is **funding**, both in terms of adequacy of funding levels and the lack of secure funding sources.

The report was completed in September, presented to the Minister of Children's Services and the Standing Policy Committee on Health and Community Living in October and approved by the Minister to be effective December 1. Our long struggle for wage parity has been achieved for provincially funded shelters and we thank the Minister of Children's Services, Iris Evans, for her dedication to women's shelters. We are committed to ensure that competitive salaries are paid to all shelter workers.

We have also working with the province on an Agenda for Action which includes core funding for shelters, a turn-away strategy, and we hope ultimately a Family Violence Commission.

On July 3rd, ACWS signed a memorandum of understanding with the RCMP: a first in Canada. Again, shelter workers gave voice to concerns at the local level which resulted in positive change.

I would like to thank Lana Wells for her guidance and leadership as President. I am sure all members wish her well in her endeavors.

In addition, I would like to thank Flavia Robles for her commitment and dedication to ACWS and welcome our new administrative support staff, Maureen Watson, and Linda Winski, who is on contract, to our organization.

Jan Reimer



COMMITTEES

ABORIGINAL ADVISORY

Tammy Grove, Chair
Patti Nooskey (Elder)

Brenda Brochu
Karen Pease

Charlene Cranebear
Kathy Sheppard

During the past year, the Aboriginal Issues Advisory Committee has moved forward on our goal of addressing the needs of on-reserve shelters as well as continuing to try to increase sensitivity to the needs of aboriginal clients in all shelters. In the last year, the Aboriginal Advisory Committee undertook the following activities:

- Following completion of Blankets, Bibles and Beads, an aboriginal resource manual for shelter workers, the committee compiled the evaluations received. Evaluations received to date have been most positive. A final report on the project was prepared for our funders. Major outcomes of our work included:
 - ◆ A comprehensive manual was developed as a major reference for shelter workers.
 - ◆ The terms of reference and approach of the ACWS Aboriginal Issues Committee changed significantly.
 - ◆ ACWS sponsored workshops now include an Aboriginal Awareness Component.
 - ◆ The province no longer requires a woman's treaty registration number.
- A letter was drafted for on-reserve shelters funded by Indian Affairs to assist them in addressing wage issues. It is recommended that shelter wages for on reserve shelters be consistent with the findings of the Compensation Review and Evaluation Report prepared for ACWS by Banister Research & Consulting Inc., which was implemented for provincially funded shelter workers.
- Plans were made to host a face-to-face meeting in May, inviting representatives from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).



COMMITTEES

BOARD GOVERNANCE

Pat Garrett, Chair

Pat Carter

Jean Langdon

Sister Lucinda May Patterson

The Board Governance Committee undertook major policy development on behalf of the ACWS Board. Policies were developed on:

1. Board Process (role of the board, code of conduct, committee terms of reference, linkage with membership, working with volunteers).
2. Board and Provincial Co-ordinator Linkage (delegation and job function, communication and counsel to the board, evaluation and compensation).
3. Finance (planning, budgeting, asset protection, fundraising, investments, and financial activities).
4. Human Resource Policies (employment and hiring practices, employee development, benefits, work standards and practices, standards of conduct).
5. ACWS Programs (use of the HOMES database, member benefits and responsibilities, protocols, communication and education programs).
6. Volunteers (recruitment, treatment, recognition, standards and practices).
7. External Linkage Policies (position statements, logos, endorsements, partnerships and medial relation and linkage with key stakeholders).

We believe that these policies also offer a prototype for our members and the committee encourages you to adapt them to meet your needs. A special thanks to the Muttart Foundation for funding this project and to Toni Lashbrook, who helped keep policies and procedures interesting.

In addition, the Board Governance Committee prepared a response to the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency request for input on their discussion paper on Registered Charities and Political Activities, organized the Board orientation last September and prepared a special resolution for this year's AGM.



COMMITTEES

CHILD WELFARE ACT REVIEW

Ermine Cummings, Chair
Kristine Cassie

Brenda Brochu
Jean Dunbar

Gerry Carter
Pat Vargas

The Child Welfare Act Review Committee reconvened for two teleconferences this year, with the first occurring following the release of the recommendations for the new Act. At that time the committee decided to await the draft of the new act. The committee took the opportunity to discuss the Child Welfare protocols, which were being developed between ACWS and the province.

With the release of the amendments to the Child Welfare Act, the committee reconvened, reviewed the amendments and submitted a letter to the Minister expressing our disappointment that none of our recommendations had been incorporated into the act. We also recommended that the issues related to family violence be dealt with through regulations. Concerns continue that the definition of emotional injury could still be utilized in ways that revictimizes the already abused mother and that the perpetrator is not being held accountable in the act.

The committee will await the Minister's response and will review the regulations when they become available. The goal is to ensure that family violence will be addressed by Child Welfare in ways that support the women and children towards living violent free lives.



COMMITTEES

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Karen Hoover, Chair
Jean Dunbar
Karen Pease

Brenda Bruchal
Sylvia Fleury
Bernice Sewell

Gerry Carter
Tess Gordey
Leslie Stauffer

Nadia Clarke
Tracey Hartnett
Pat Vargas

Mike Dickinson
Kate Hynes

This year has seen a full agenda for the Education and Training Committee. The Terms of Reference for the Committee have been reviewed and approved. The primary activities of the committee have been:

1. Children Who Witness Violence Training Seminar:

The program will be held June 9 – 13, 2003 at Grant MacEwan College Downtown Campus. Much of the work of preparing for the training seminar has been in partnership with Peter Jaffe of the London Family Court Clinic. YWCA Sheriff King Home has also offered to share a Parenting Program Manual, a Children's Program Manual and a Child Support Handbook as resources to be used with this program. The province provided funding for curriculum development and training. This funding will provide one child support worker and one crisis intervention worker from each shelter with all expenses paid to attend this training opportunity. It is also hoped that one child welfare worker from each area will attend. In addition, we have been looking at training trainers who will contract with ACWS to act as resource persons to provide shelter-based training in the regions on an on-going basis. Thank you also goes to the IODE and the Wild Rose Foundation for their funding.

2. Training Package for Crisis Intervention Workers:

ACWS is partnering with Carol McArthur of Portage College in Lac La Biche to develop a crisis intervention workers training package.

3. Administrative Assistants Program:

We also began planning our first training program for shelter Administrative Assistants. We are partnering with the Alberta Chapter of the Association of Administrative Assistants to provide two days of training on April 24 and 25, 2003 in Edmonton.

4. Public Service Announcements (PSA's):

A proposal went forward to develop three PSA's to be funded by the province as well as a separate partnership with Women in Film. Topic areas will feature the importance of women's shelters and violence against women. A Livia Stoyke Foundation member has proposed doing the PSA that would be shown in movie theatres.



We foster professional development and networking...

COMMITTEES

SHELTER PROGRAMS

Joie Dery, Chair
Marj Luger

Moriah Boyd
Kathleen Nakagawa

Pat Garrett
Mary Ann Sanderson

Donna Getschel
Kathy Sheppard

Carolyn Goard
Pat Vargas

Stable and adequate funding for shelters...A major effort has occurred to raise awareness in the lack of funding currently in place to fund core services provided by shelters. Presentations have been made to not only Children and Family Services, but to many of the departments who have a stake in the ongoing attempt to 'deal' with the effects of family violence. The presentation to a group of government ministries was very effective, raised much awareness, and resulted in a commitment to increase financial support for costs arising from the provision of current 'core' services. In addition, a process is being undertaken by the government to redefine 'core' services to more correctly reflect what services shelters are providing.

Employee compensation and benefits...Through a grant received by ACWS, Banister Research & Consulting Inc. did extensive research comparing wages for shelter staff compared to other agencies, both government and not-for-profit sectors. The resulting document, not surprisingly, determined that shelter staff were compensated at a rate considerably lower than any other comparable agency. The government was presented with this information and very shortly thereafter responded with funding to cover substantial increases for all government funded positions. Benefit rates compensated by government funding are yet to be decided. The shelter group insurance was evaluated and it was determined that rates, although increased, were in line with other coverage providers.

Shelter Information is disseminated through the ACWS office. Through the magic of cyber space, shelters are receiving a tremendous amount of information regarding the issues surrounding family violence at local, provincial, and federal levels. Although shelter board members do not meet as frequently as was the practice prior to the ACWS 'redesign', members have more information now than ever, and are certainly aware of daily events and concerns. Much of the committee's time and effort has gone into the WSIS redesign, and working to a universal computer data collection system through the Canadian Outcomes Institute. A Community Mobilization Grant has given ACWS the financial support to enable this. Extensive work has gone into information sharing agreements both between ACWS and the shelters, and the shelters and COI. We have yet to enter into an agreement with the province. This system, when it all comes together, will no doubt be a tremendous benefit to shelters, ACWS and the government. The WSIS redesign has resulted in extensive work. We needed to look closely at the information being gathered, why it was being gathered, and what the information would be used for. The design also needed to meet the requirements of all sizes of shelters, as well as rural versus urban shelters. While the residential component is complete, we are still struggling with the non-residential components. At this time, training is occurring for shelters ready to "go on-line". The Muttart Foundation has provided computer hardware to ensure most shelters had adequate equipment to support the HOMES program. Also introduced this year was the infamous "Exit Survey". The government initiated this process, which could be compared to a client satisfaction survey, to collect the statistics they require to meet their identified 'measurable outcomes'. In addition ACWS took the opportunity to ask to ask questions to departing residential clients, namely how inadequate funding and lack of affordable housing affects women leaving violent relationships.



COMMITTEES

SOCIAL & LEGAL ISSUES

Lise Blanchette, Chair
Karen Schiltroth

Brenda Brochu
Mary Jean Thompson

Kristine Cassie
Pat Vargas

Lorie Friesen
Simonne Walsh

The Social and Legal Issues Committee responded to government requests for input on the Family Law Review, the Social Care Facilities Review and for the MLA Review Committee on Charitable Gaming Licensing and Use of Proceeds.

In addition, a position paper was prepared with respect to the need for custody and access exchange centres throughout the province was prepared in conjunction with YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre and Sheriff King Home and a submission prepared for key Ministers with respect to the need for legal support positions in shelters.

We compiled Exit Survey Results which were used in a media release and letters to MLA's. We found that 45% of women who had been to shelters in the past returned to their abuser due to a lack of resources. Low Supports for Independence rates definitely are a factor in forcing women to stay in unsafe situations.

Much of the information compiled by the committee was used as a basis for the Board's presentation to key provincial Ministers which was arranged by Minister Iris Evans. The presentation received very positive feedback and we are now receiving follow-up letters to our recommendations.

With respect to our monitoring of the RCMP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), we were pleased to see the RCMP commit to train all of its officers over the next two years in family violence issues, following a well-received Investigators course, which was identified in the MOU.



ACWS MEMBERSHIP

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|----------------|
| A Safe Place | Sherwood Park | Lloydminster Interval Home | Lloydminster |
| Awo Taan Native Women's Shelter | Calgary | Lurana Shelter | Edmonton |
| Bigstone Cree Nation Women's Emergency Shelter | Wabasca | Mikisew Cree First Nation – Paspew House | Fort Chipewan |
| Brenda Strafford Centre | Calgary | Odyssey House | Grande Prairie |
| Brigantia Place | Camrose | Peace River Regional Women's Shelter | Peace River |
| Brooks & District Women's Safe Shelter Society | Brooks | Phoenix Safe House | Medicine Hat |
| Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter | Calgary | Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter | Pincher Creek |
| Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter | Red Deer | Dr. Margaret Savage Crisis Centre | Cold Lake |
| Columbus House of Hope | St. Paul | Safe Home | High Level |
| Community Crisis Society – Region 5 | Strathmore | Sonshine Community Services | Calgary |
| Crossroads Resource Centre | Fairview | Sucker Creek Women's Emergency Shelter | Sucker Creek |
| Discovery House Family Violence Prevention Society | Calgary | Taber & District Family Crisis Intervention Society | Taber |
| Eagle Women's Emergency Shelter | Black Diamond | Unity House | Fort McMurray |
| Edmonton Sinor Safe Housing | Edmonton | Wellspring Family Resource & Crisis Centre | Whitcourt |
| Edmonton Women's Shelter | Edmonton | Wings of Providence | Edmonton |
| Ermineskin Women's Shelter | Maskwaci | Yellowhead Emergency Shelter | Hinton |
| Grande Cache Transition House | Grand Cache | Youville Women's Residence | Calgary |
| Hope Haven Society | Lac La Biche | YWCA of Banff | Banff |
| Kainai Women's Healing Centre | Cardston | YWCA Harbour House | Lethbridge |
| Kerby Centre | Calgary | YWCA Family Violence Prevention Centre | Calgary |
| La Salle Residence | Edmonton | & Sheriff King Home | |



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 Ermine Cummings
 Mike Dickinson
 Kathy Sheppard

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 Joie Dery
 Karen Hoover

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 Flavia Robles, Special Projects & Office Manager
 Maureen Watson, Office Assistant
 Linda Winski, Public Education & Research Manager

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 Jim Cregan
 Jean Eastwood
 Dora Francis
 Corey Hanf
 Mike Jabobs
 Barbara Luckhurst
 Richard Marks
 Connie McBride
 RoseMarie McCarthy
 Pilar Robles
 Rob Squire

Arlene Chapman
 Peggy Dick
 Kirby Eastwood
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 Dorothy Johansen
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 Parminder Phun
 Roberta Robles
 Anime Wakal

FUNDERS

Clifford E Lee Foundation
 Community Mobilization Program
 Edmonton Community Foundation
 Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE)
 Ministry of Children's Services
 Muttart Foundation
 Status of Women Canada
 Wild Rose Foundation

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AUDITOR'S REPORT



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The ACWS logo symbolizes a dove for peace; clasped hands that represent our 'one unified voice' and; finally a heart which enables us all to continue our common mission to break the cycle of violence and abuse.

“We believe in a world free from violence and abuse.”