

## Breaking Stereotypes: being a role model

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### First World Conference of Women's Shelters: *A Dream Comes True*

When Provincial Coordinator, Jan Reimer, put up her hand at the Inter-American Conference of Shelters in Mexico City in the fall of 2006 and offered to host the First World Conference of Women's Shelters in Edmonton, it seemed like an impossible dream. Thanks to the hard work of Jan and ACWS staff and the enthusiasm of shelter workers and interested individuals from around the world, it's quickly becoming a reality.

The conference, Discovering the Common Core: Practical Frameworks for

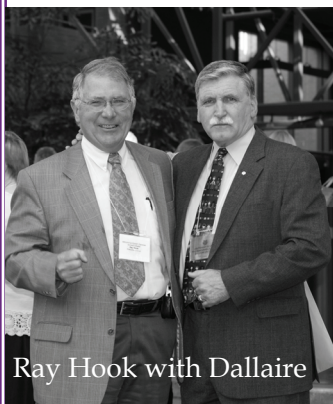
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### Interview with Ray Hook,

*Former executive director of Brigantia Place Shelter, Camrose*

Camrose was on the leading edge when the board of Brigantia Place shelter hired a male executive director in 2005. Ray Hook, who retired from the position in March of this year, was the first man to hold that position in the province, if not in the country. Since then a male director has been hired in Red Deer. "It was a wise move to break the misconception that we have to protect women from men," Ray says. "When they leave the shelter they are going to have to deal with men."

He did his best to be a role model of what a husband, a father, an uncle, or a male friend could be just by being himself, and being there. "The little boys especially liked to hang around my office rather than be with all those women," he says. He received a letter soon after he started from a woman who had stayed in the shelter saying that, "Captain Hook blew away her stereotypical image of a military man."



Ray Hook with Dallaire

Ray spent 32 years in the military, retiring in 1998 as a Lieutenant Colonel. When he first saw the shelter position advertised it didn't interest him. "I didn't have the posted qualifications," he admits. "Most shelter directors do everything. No wonder so many burn out!"

In order to keep the Camrose shelter operating, the Board adopted a team approach; the executive director responsible for procedures, policies, public speaking, budget, fund-raising and building upkeep; a Program Manager responsible for the direct client care. "This allowed us both to focus on what we did best and the shelter benefited," Ray says.

In the military he had been exposed to many different leadership styles and gained experience in management, leadership, planning, communications, finances and teamwork, so he brought those skills to the job at the shelter. Despite his experience, he admits to being terrified on his first day. "I was very self-conscious

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## Message from the Provincial Coordinator

It's an exciting time for us at the ACWS office, and a busy one as we plan and prepare for the First World Conference of Women's Shelters. We received an amazing number of abstracts. The committee had a very difficult job choosing which ones to include. We were expecting between 40 and 80 and instead received more than 300. The Abstract Review Committee put a priority on abstracts that :

- had relevance and fit with conference themes and topics
- had clear implications for shelter practice
- had an active shelter presence
- had a practical approach with proven results
- had clarity and originality

It was impossible to fit all of the excellent abstracts into the agenda but we're currently trying to find ways that all of this information can be shared with conference participants.

I have to mention the wonderful community support we're receiving to enable us to host the conference. We're also getting beautiful e-mails from around the world thanking us for putting it on.

Alberta is becoming increasingly multicultural and links with other shelters in other countries will assist us in providing the best possible services to new immigrants in our province.

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Each day of the conference will end with a wellness session in order to stress the importance of self-care and the value we place on shelter worker well-being.

We certainly recognize how difficult it is for our shelter workers to do the work they're doing without burning out given the current realities of this province. What we are seeing around the province is that:

- Women are staying longer and bringing fewer dependants with them.
- There is an increase in level of severity of violence.
- Women are younger and more transient.

**From Belarus** We are all very excited with opportunity to participate in the first World Conference of Women's Shelters. Belarus is one of the countries in Eastern Europe where domestic violence and creation of shelters is going to be one of the priorities. Some shelter's specialists would be very interested to participate in the Conference but they have very limited financial resources. It would unrealistic to expect that they would be able to pay even for one night in the hotel because it is exceeding their monthly salary.



Elizabeth with *The Map*

**From Kenya** I salute you- I also will be glad to be a Shelter Presenter if offered the chance. More so, since now I consider you my sister. My country Kenya is in turmoil -You know when two bulls fight, it is the grass which suffers most: This is what is the order of the day, families displaced, women and girls raped, houses burnt, shops looted and menfolk killed mercilessly. For me to fill this application, I had to go and find a cybercafé in the Capital city where the entrance is highly restricted. Let the Love of God bind us together and pray for peace for my beloved mother country. Amen. Thank you for doing this!

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# The Message Reaches the Masses

## Family Violence Prevention Month Campaign November 2007

**“You have to get the media inside. They have a huge influence,”** Senator Romeo Dallaire told shelter workers during his visit to Alberta last May. The 2007 Family Prevention Month (FVPM) campaign, in November, accomplished just that.

“Even with no budget for a FVPM Campaign, we managed to get huge media attention,” reports Communications Coordinator Patti McClocklin. “Reporters were phoning us from everywhere in the province.”

Ben-Atherton Zeman, spokesperson for the *National Organization for Men Against Sexism*, attracted 270 guests to Edmonton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> annual **Breakfast with the Guys**, hosted by Mayor Mandel and Hugh Campbell, and garnered both local and provincial coverage. His participation in a student leadership event at the University of Alberta campus in partnership with UofA student volunteers, the Office of Human Rights and the UofA Sexual Assault Centre also received excellent campus media coverage.

Brian Vallée, author of *The War on Women*, attracted media attention and reached new audiences in Calgary through the **Cup of Tea** book launch and a Country Music Night.



Brian Vallée reading from *The War on Women*

A presentation by Daryl Fort during a **Breakfast with the Chiefs** at the annual *Knowing Our Spirits Conference* in Edmonton was preceded by

a *Mentors in Violence* training session at City Centre High.

In addition to those organized by ACWS, events held in support of the shelters provided opportunities for awareness and education.

Global anchor and Edmonton Journal columnist Lynda Steele’s launch of her collected columns *Laptop Diaries* raised \$85,000 for Edmonton women’s shelters. Lynda then went on to win a harness racing challenge with co-anchor Gord Steinke. Her charity of choice? ACWS!



Linda Steele presenting the winner’s cheque

Other highlights of the campaign include the premier of *Speak*, a play about domestic violence on the Horizon Stage in Spruce Grove, and a donation from the Roller City Derby Girls collected during their awareness *Walk and Roll* from Calgary to Edmonton.

By far, the most attention was received after a media event to distribute the ACWS report: *Continuing Trends and Practices: the State of Alberta’s Children*, researched and written by Dr. Kate Woodman. This document called on all levels of government to act in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which Canada has ratified. The reality is that we, as a community, fall short in keeping children safe, sheltered and secure. The document can be viewed and downloaded from our website at [www.acws.ca](http://www.acws.ca).

## Spotlight on Lurana Shelter

It's 2:00 AM.

There is no sign outside the Lurana Shelter and its Edmonton location is not publicized. A six-foot wire fence surrounds the two-storey building and the gate slides silently open to allow admission to the parking lot. This security measure is supplemented by a digital surveillance system of cameras, intercoms and alarms. There is bullet-proof glass on the windows and the bedroom drapes have a dark-out component so that no light can be seen when they are drawn. Each bedroom has an emergency kit in case occupants must remain in their locked rooms.

"We're set up to handle any kind of emergency," Sister Lucinda May Patterson explains. Like many executive directors around the province, she is working the graveyard shift tonight. The shelter is on Red Alert at the moment, due to a death threat, so staff are doing three security checks every shift. "It's not a facility where people want to be," she admits, although staff do their best to create a comfortable atmosphere inside for the women and children fleeing domestic violence. Beds are covered with handmade quilts and afghans. Everyone receives a stuffed animal and a welcome bag.

The shelter has a five-day assessment period to determine how the woman and children are adjusting and whether or not Lurana provides the right environment for them. They are allowed to stay another 21 days after that. With the current housing shortage, extraordinary extensions are sometimes granted.

Lurana Shelter has a capacity of 32 occupants in its 10 bedrooms. Between 850 to 1,000 women and children cycle through the centre each year. Bedrooms range in size, but one has seven beds and a crib so families can stay together. Single women share a room even when the shelter isn't full as the sit-

uation can change with the next phone call. "This shift, people usually come in via the police," Sister Lucinda says.

Close to 40 staff work at the shelter with two on duty overnight and four to eight working during the day time. Lengths of shifts vary with some team members working 10 hours. "Very few have a regular work week."



The Library

The Playroom

The shelter has a well-stocked playroom for young children that is accessible at any hour. A room full of donated clothing gives families the opportunity to pick out new clothes. Sister Lucinda insists that all donations be new rather than used. "It starts the whole journey of 'I'm worth something'," she says, and helps the women regain their confidence. The shelter also houses a resource room, a group room and a meditation room. Staff members offer child care, women's groups, crafts, videos, baking sessions and accompany the mothers and children to the adjacent fenced playground. "There's a purpose to all the activities, even if it's just helping a woman and child to play together again."



The Dining Room

Every Wednesday night Lurana has a candlelight dinner. Staff serve the women and children to reinforce that they are "the beloved," Sister Lucinda paraphrases a passage from the gospel of Mark. "Even though it's something small, it's not small at all," she says,

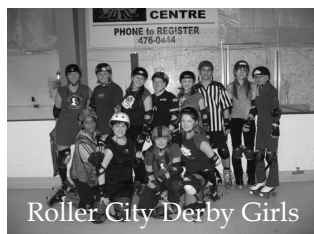
# Thank you!

ACWS is grateful for the generous support of many individuals and many organizations over the past year.

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Talisman Energy Inc.  
Edmonton Northlands  
Mr William Daly  
Mr Kevin Fitzgerald

We apologize to anyone  
whose name has been  
missed— your support and  
commitment to ACWS and  
our member shelters is  
much appreciated.



# Community Partnerships

This past year ACWS has partnered with the University of Alberta through a Community - Service - Learning (CSL) project established through the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations. Professors in various faculties add a component to their course requiring that students commit 20 volunteer hours to a community partner.

Students choose an organization for many reasons including the opportunity to practice some of the theory they are learning. But often they are placed with an organization after their interest is piqued at an in class presentation by a community partner. Over the past two semesters ACWS has enjoyed working with 14 student volunteers.

10 students, who researched shelters and shelter organizations around the world, helped to create a database for the world conference that is more than amazing. We have contacted over 1,200 individuals including over 800 shelters who have expressed their interest in the world conference.

It would not have been possible to connect with so many people from around the world without the hard work of our CSL students as a global list of shelters does not currently exist.

The volunteer assistance of 4 other CSL students in organizing The Voices of Men event, at the University of Alberta campus in November, was critical to its success. It also provided valuable learning for the students involved.

***“I was skeptical as to how we could market this performance in a fashion that welcomes men rather than blames men,” one student admitted. In the end, the student concluded “the men who attended were proud to be part of the solution and it made everyone (men and women) aware of the daily steps that can be taken to ensure women are treated/ respected as equals.”***

# Adopt a Shelter

Shelter workers from around the globe are excited about the first World Conference of Women's Shelters to be held in Edmonton this September and would love to attend. However, these front-line staff can barely keep a roof over their own heads, let alone travel to another continent. Yet they are the very workers who may benefit the most by meeting colleagues, sharing ideas and knowing they are not alone in the work they do. In order to make this conference the best it can be we need the diversity of experiences they will bring.

Shelter workers in Bangladesh, while also pleased and enthusiastic about the opportunity the conference provides to learn and co-operate with others around the world in order to build a better future for the suffering women and children of Bangladesh, but also pointed out the difficulty they would have attending. *"We definitely acknowledge that we have will power, but our resources and supports are tremendously limited*

*and we [require] them for taking better initiatives in providing services and care for women and children in fearful violence."*

In order to bring as many delegates as possible from developing nations, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters has set up an **Adopt-A-Shelter** program. Edmonton Sun columnist Graham Hicks kicked off the campaign with a plea in his regular column *Hicks on Six* asking companies to donate a product or service to be auctioned on [CampusAuctionMarket.com](http://CampusAuctionMarket.com). This has raised \$1200 to date with Edmonton businessman Bruce Saville offering to double the amount raised. The more money we raise the more shelter workers can attend. Please encourage your communities to get involved. You can find more information about the conference and **Adopt-A-Shelter** at [www.womenshelter.ca](http://www.womenshelter.ca). Cheques to the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters can be mailed to:

#320, 10310 Jasper Avenue,  
Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2W4

## Spotlight on Lurana Shelter *continued...*

"It instills in the women that they are worthy of respect."

Lurana is not at capacity tonight; but is the only shelter in Edmonton with space so staff expect it to change within the next day or so. However, the executive director says she is seeing a drop in the numbers that she thinks might be attributed to new legislation. "If women and children can be kept safe at home, someday there may not be a need for this type of shelter," she says optimistically.

## A Dream Comes True *continued...*

Change, will be held in the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton September 8-11, 2008. That's this fall!

"ACWS has been in touch with women's organizations or shelters around the world," Jan says, "including shelters in Africa, Asia, Australia, South America, Europe, the UK and the US." Over 1,200 individuals have contacted ACWS to receive information on the conference. The response has been heart warming.

The enthusiasm is shared by shelter workers in this province who will have a wonderful opportunity to participate in the discussion of family violence and to learn both from international experts and from each other. The conference also provides the opportunity to establish baseline data on shelter programs and best practices from around the world—information that is badly needed in order to deal with the global issue of violence towards women and children. For more information or to

register for the conference visit [www.womenshelter.ca](http://www.womenshelter.ca).

## Message from the Provincial Coordinator *continued...*

- Women with access to residential school payments are choosing to stay in abusive situations.
- Women are reluctant to interrupt their child's education as schools have more students, are typically full and places are harder to find. In some places, the school will no longer accept a student without a permanent address. In other communities, the school insists shelter children are placed in a "Storefront School" program.
- Women have increasingly complex issues, often with addictions and their children already in care.
- Women are in greater danger, such as escaping gang activity and enter shelter with higher needs.

Overall there seems to be more money available to women from Emergency Social Services, so shelter is a second choice.

We now get reports of how difficult it is for shelter workers themselves to find afford housing. The inability to provide competitive wages means staff shortages, which places more of the burden on the remaining workers. The dedicated workers on the front line are doing an amazing job!

This year's AGM promises to be most exciting. We are marking our 25th anniversary of serving women's shelters in Alberta. Our special guests include:

- Dr. Jacquelyn Campbell, world renowned researcher and originator of the Danger Assessment tool, who along with Alberta shelters will be presenting the results of our joint research project – the first of its kind!
- And for a bit of levity, comedienne Shirley Best

returns to delight us and invite us to laugh.

In conclusion I would like to pay a special tribute to our ACWS staff. Besides working hard on the World Conference, they continue to move forward our agenda of a world free from violence and abuse. Our Breakfasts with the Guys are being replicated across the country; the most recent one in Calgary was co-hosted by Premier Ed Stelmach and Calgary Police Chief Rick Hanson. Our Family Prevention Month campaign generated a terrific amount of media attention and our Who Cares campaign leads us to anticipate that we'll start to see some significant changes. – *Jan Reimer*

## What do you do when you invite the world to a conference and they accept?

**You ask for help!** There is a lot of work involved in planning a conference: before, during, and after! We invite you to help us host the First World Conference of Women's Shelters this September. A big priority is to find an experienced Volunteer Coordinator to recruit and coordinate volunteers. Volunteers are also needed for the following duties: preparing delegate bags, transportation, hosting, helping at the registration and information desks, serving as room monitors, translating (particularly French and Spanish) and many other tasks along the way. Volunteers who speak a second language would be particularly helpful. If you are interested in serving as Volunteer Coordinator or assisting with the conference in any way, please contact: [charleenshaw@acws.ca](mailto:charleenshaw@acws.ca).

## Community Partnerships *continued...*

The student appreciated the opportunity to take what she had learned out of the classroom and **"make a difference and enlighten others on the epidemic that is domestic violence."** She said her involvement gave her a feeling for what it is like to do this sort of activist work. **"I've started to feel like I have an obligation to DO something with my degree."** Another student commented that she realized the importance of sharing her awareness and knowledge of domestic violence. **"Rather than keeping this dialogue within select academic circles I ought to talk about it in larger group settings; at work, at home, out with friends at the bar."**

These comments demonstrate the valuable partnership for both the students and for ACWS. Their work has made our work a success.

**Interview with Ray Hook** *continued...*

about how the women would feel about having a man at the shelter,” he says.

Ray adopted his management style to the shelter milieu. “I also discovered the importance of language - the various meanings and uses of words - and became more aware of mannerisms and body language. It was a real learning curve for me.” Ray is grateful for the support of his team and all the work that they did. “The front line staff are the single most important part of the shelter and I will be forever grateful for their work and support.” He misses that collegiality.

During his tenure, Ray spoke to Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, other service clubs, and other male-dominated organizations, talking about the number of women and children affected by family violence and how many have to be turned away from shelters. “As a guy speaking to the guys I think it carried more

weight,” he says, “and sadly this is still a reality today in parts of Alberta.”

He found ACWS of tremendous assistance, especially the quarterly meetings with other executive directors. “It was helpful to know others were experiencing the same problems as you were,” he says.

Burnout is common in human service jobs, but Ray found he could leave the job at work. He and his wife are active Scottish dancers. He also works in stained glass, golfs and keeps busy with home repairs. “I didn’t dwell on the woman’s broken arm and black eyes,” he says. “I focused on what we could do for her while in shelter rather than what happened to her because I couldn’t do anything about that.”

Ray’s job at the shelter was the best job he ever had,” he says. “It was the most satisfying, the most frustrating and the most challenging. I’m a better person for it and I hope I made a difference. I’m still passionate about the place.”