

VICTORIA FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION SOCIETY

A large, stylized graphic of a flame or fire, rendered in shades of gray and black. The flame is composed of several large, curved, teardrop-like shapes that rise from a dark base at the bottom. The overall effect is a bold, abstract representation of fire.

annual report 07/08

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2007 / 2008 board

The Board of the Victoria Family Violence Society

Valerie Sovran Mitchell, Chair
Michele Murphy, Secretary
Pat Holberg, Treasurer
Kate Hamm
Riley Hern

2007 / 2008 staff

Executive Director: Ron Schwartz
Part-time Counsellors: Alyssa Collister, Chris van Elsakker, Janet Henly, Jenny Holder,
Patricia Nasmyth, Michael Timney. Casual Counsellors: Sarah Corrin, Chris de Boer,
Angie Dufort, Mia Grenier, Michelle Milligan, Evelyn Morrell, Candy Porter, Cory Porter,
Leonore Smith, and Cathy Welch.

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THE VICTORIA FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION SOCIETY

has provided programs for men who use abuse and women who have been abused in relationships since 1985.

our mission

OUR MISSION is to stop the abuse of women by their intimate partners, thus breaking the cyclic and often inter-generational pattern of family violence. This goal is pursued through:

- Education and counselling programs for men who use physical and psychological abuse against women in intimate relationships;
- Education and support programs for women who have experienced abuse in relationships; and,
- Community education, training for professional and lay counsellors, videos and print materials.

our vision

OUR VISION is a community where:

- Women are safe from assault, intimidation and degradation by partners;
- Men and women live in relationships of mutual respect and equality; and,
- Children see their parents as role models for healthy, non-abusive relationships.

message from the board

by Valerie Mitchell, Board Chair

As you will read in the following pages, our programs provided essential and effective services in the Capital Region over the 2007/08 year. The majority of our clients arrived through referrals from other agencies but many also found their way to our door on their own, learning about us through word of mouth, staff presentations or our website and print materials displayed throughout the community.

2007/08 also marked the first stage of the new project "Fantastic Fathers: A Parenting Curriculum for Men", an initiative partly funded by the Ministry of Community Services. Men attended a 14 session parenting group designed to incorporate best practices in the field of child-centred men's parenting. An evaluation of this pilot produced very positive results that lend themselves well to transferring the knowledge gained to other communities around the province who may wish to implement similar programs.

As indicated in last year's annual report, finances are always a challenge for small non-profit agencies such as ours. Changes in provincial policies and United Way funding arrangements have heightened those challenges in recent years. The Board has been committed to providing services as long as financially feasible to do so. With the efforts of Board and staff, we have for the past 5 years managed to stretch our resources as far as possible, looking for efficiencies and cost-savings wherever possible and drawing down on our reserves only when necessary. However, as 2007/08 draws to a close, the Board recognizes that current funding arrangements make it impossible to continue to operate as a small non-profit agency. Efforts to appeal to the provincial government for core funding have so far not been successful. Without core funding, we will face closure in the 2008/09 year.

Recognizing the need to look for other solutions, we determined that the best way to ensure that these essential services continue to be available would be to seek a partnership with a larger organization that shared our philosophy and vision for women's safety. At the time of writing this message, Board is engaged in discussions with the Pacific Centre for the Family and hopeful that a satisfactory outcome can be reached. The Board is also continuing to advocate with the Provincial government for sustainable funding for men's treatment programs, whether those programs are delivered by our agency or another agency that shares our values.

It has been profoundly difficult to face the prospect of closing our agency. The Victoria Family Violence Project has operated in the Capital Region for more than 25 years and is proud of the work of our dedicated and exceptional staff and volunteers who have shown tremendous flexibility and commitment through the financial storms. The Board wishes to express our heartfelt appreciation to all of them. We hope that they will be able to continue their work under newly organized arrangements. The Board also wishes to thank the many donors who have supported our agency over the years. Without them, we would have reached this crossroads a lot earlier.

And most importantly, the Board and staff of the Victoria Family Violence Project wishes to acknowledge the courageous men and women who have participated in our programs, taking a step in their lives to stop the abuse and live free from violence.

The question about the future of the Victoria Family Violence Prevention Society will be put to the membership at the Annual General meeting.

07/08 program overview

THE COUNSELLING WORK OF THE FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECT

The Family Violence Project provides group programs for men who use abuse in relationships, and support for women who have been abused by their partners. This year 164 men and 142 women, a total of 306 people from Greater Victoria, Sidney, the Gulf Islands, the Western Communities and Duncan received service.

ASSESSMENT - COMPLETED BY 160 MEN

An individual interview with a male counsellor assesses the man's suitability for the program and helps him to recognize his problem and make a commitment to change. Detailed questions about physical, sexual, psychological and property abuse help to undermine the common defences of justification and blaming his partner for the abuse.

WOMEN PARTNERS

Assessment is not complete until the man's partner is interviewed. Interviewing the partner increases her awareness of the range and dynamics of abuse in relationships and offers her support and referrals to other resources. It provides a more complete assessment of the extent and impact of abuse. We continue to contact her by telephone while the man attends the program, and encourage her to contact us if she experiences violence or fear, or if she has concerns about the program.

PHASE I - COMPLETED BY 150 MEN

Men attend 16 group sessions to reduce or eliminate their violence toward their partner. The successful completion includes cessation of assaults, threats and harassment of women partners, and use of the tools taught in the program: taking responsibility, talking himself down, using a support network, listening and avoiding substance abuse.

PHASE II - ATTENDED BY 27 MEN

Men work to maintain non-violence and take increasing responsibility for psychological abuse and other controlling behaviours which destroy relationships.

men's groups

This year a total of
160
men completed assessments and

142
men attended the FVP groups

woman's groups

WOMAN'S SUPPORT AND EDUCATION GROUP

The goal of the women's program is to empower women to make healthy choices to protect the safety and emotional well being of themselves and their children. We offer a two stage group program, open to any woman who has experienced relationship abuse, whether her partner attends or not. Our Woman's Support and Education Group is built around a 6 week rotating curriculum. Clients are able to access service within one week of contacting the agency. The 12 week Advanced group provides women who have attended the support group an opportunity to move beyond coping to repairing the damaging consequences of abuse in relationships.

WEST SHORE COLLABORATIVE WOMEN'S DROP IN GROUP

In the last year the Women's Group has been well attended. Women are seeking a safe place to learn about the cycles of abuse and to regain power in their personal lives on many levels. The structure of the group varies depending on the needs of the clients and the size of the group. There is a component of education in each group including educational videos, hand-outs or in depth group discussions on topics such as: safety planning, impacts of abuse on children, dealing with the legal system, codependency, addictions issues and referrals. The group serves as a place for women to connect with each other, share stories and relay important experiences and information. This is an invaluable process for many women, as it serves to be not only practical but extremely emotionally supportive. Recently one woman expressed in the group:

"After I left the group last week I realized I was holding back from asserting my needs due to a sense of loyalty to my husband. Last week in the group it was suggested to me that maybe I was acting out of loyalty and not out of love. I went to the lawyer and got my separation started today because I realized I needed to be loyal to myself and my children, not to an abusive person who is unwilling to be responsible. Me and my kids are the priority now. Thank you for the support. It really changed me!"

Every week women thank us for being there and express how important it is to have a safe place to go to get counselling and have time for themselves. The service is crucial in our community as it serves a population of women who otherwise would fall through the cracks. We take women into the group who may not have left their relationships but need support, education and counselling to increase their and their children's safety as well as their overall quality of life. Many women we see in the group are in a critical stage where they need support and education to build their self esteem in order to make informed decisions with support from their community that they so deserve.

This year a total of
100
women partners completed assessments and

46
women attended the FVP support & education groups

woman using violence

WOMEN USING VIOLENCE is a counselling program for women who use physical violence against male or female partners in intimate relationships. The service is not designed for women using violence in self-defence or occasional retaliation against an abusive partner. The goal of the program is to help women refrain from using violence and learn the skills of assertiveness, effective communication and behavioural alternatives to violence.

A partnership of five agencies has supported and guided this service for women since 1997. In 2003/2004 we were pleased to be chosen by the United Way to receive a Collaborative Grant of \$5000/year for 3 years. This grant ensures that women will receive service, regardless of their ability to pay, and also allows us to print pamphlets and raise awareness of the service in the community.

Cathy Welch, a counsellor in private practice with expertise in the field counsels these women.

In 2006/2007, there were 11 assessments completed with 7 women receiving individual counselling

Partner Agencies:

Family Violence Project

Hill House Transition House

Pacific Centre Family Services

Goldstream Neighbourhood House

Citizens' Counselling Centre

Partner Agencies:

Family Violence Project

Victoria Woman's Transition House

FANTASTIC FATHERS – PARENTING INITIATIVE

Pilot Program in 2007 to 2008 was designed to:

- Engage and motivate men to overcome their reluctance and other barriers to participating in a process of change
- Educate men in a model of child-centered fathering
- Invite men to understand and take responsibility for their abusive behaviour:
 - Neglect, absence, physical and sexual abuse
 - Violence against women in relationships
- Provide the tools to explore age appropriate child misbehaviour strategies
- Encourage men to become empathetic supporters of their partners parenting.

fantastic fathers

community collaborations

The Family Violence Project is extremely proud of our partnerships. We simply would not have been able to deliver the number and quality of services without these most crucial stakeholders.

ERA BC: We are a founding member of the **Ending Relationship Abuse Society of B.C.** a provincial umbrella group whose vision is to contribute to stopping violence in relationships through province-wide provision of effective, accessible, ethical services for individuals who have used abuse in relationships.

VAWIR: The Violence Against Women in Relationships Committee of Victoria is a multi-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional committee comprised of community agencies, shelters, police, probation, crown, victim services, legal advocacy, and MCFD to discuss issues relevant to our systems' response to issues of violence in relationships.

WEST SHORE FAMILY VIOLENCE COLLABORATIVE

The Western Communities is a rapidly growing area with many young families who are at risk for violence. The semi-rural characteristics of the communities promote isolation of women from social support and limit access to services, increasing the risk of violence in relationships.

The Collaborative provides an easily accessible program for women. Explorations is an ongoing drop-in outreach/education group designed to increase awareness of the problem and resources to change. Up to five crisis counselling sessions can also be accessed which ensures the women receive immediate service while wait-listed for longer term counselling. This service is coordinated with other services offered by the three collaborating partners, such as individual counselling at Pacific Centre and crisis services at Hill House. The Collaboration grant also provides partial financial support for a Family Violence Project men's group in the Western Communities.

Women's group leaders report that all of women who attended the drop-in group have gained support for their safety by accessing the group regularly and forming supportive relationships outside the group with other members. Although the minority require the child minding and transportation subsidies that are offered, this support was essential to assure accessibility for some women.

Partner Agencies:

Family Violence Project

Hill House Transition House

Pacific Centre Family Services

This year a
total of

306

people
in the
Southern
Vancouver
Island
region
received
service
from FVP

