

ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016



Canadian Network of Women's
Shelters & Transition Houses

Réseau canadien des maisons
d'hébergement pour femmes

**CNWSTH
COLLABORATES,
EDUCATES AND
INNOVATES TO
END VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN**

ABOUT US

In 2009, drawn together by a shared vision to end violence against women and the need for a unified voice at the national level, the provincial and territorial shelter associations began giving shape to the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses. Together, we have become a national, collaborative voice for change. The Network was incorporated and became a charitable organization in December 2012.

Our Beliefs

- We believe that governments and societies are responsible for ensuring women's human rights.
- We believe that violence violates women's human rights and equality.
- We believe that the women's shelter movement plays a critical leadership role in the provincial/territorial, national and global effort to end violence against women and their children.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

Having completed our third year of working to bring a unified voice at the national level on the issue of violence against women, we are very much feeling like “the little engine that could”. Optimism and hard work has brought us to a place we are all proud of. Working with our many partners to improve services and policies to respond to the needs of women and their children fleeing violence is at the heart of our efforts. Our Board had its first in-person meeting in Ottawa in August 2015. What a pleasure it was to finally meet after two and a half years of conference calls! The capacity to meet face to face was an important milestone in establishing our work and voice as a national organization.

Over the last year we have greatly expanded our capacity for outreach. We have increased public awareness on key violence against women issues and the services available across the country. June 2015 saw the launch of ShelterSafe.ca, an online tool that provides reliable information on shelters and their 24/7 crisis lines. The objective of ShelterSafe.ca is to let women know that it is not their fault and that help is available any time of day or night. The launch garnered articles in both national and local media across the country. Our founding partners were the RBC Foundation and the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation. We are extremely grateful for their support which is allowing us to keep this resource up to date and to expand the number of women and services making use of this tool.

The Network's completely revamped website went live in September 2015. We are grateful to the folks at Harbinger, who carried out this work pro bono. Our Practice Implementation Manual was released last winter which dovetailed nicely with the beginning of our involvement with the Open Doors project, a project being carried out in partnership with the YWCA of Canada and BC Society of Transition Houses.

With the fall 2015 election and the announcement of cabinet, we now have a full Minister for the Status of Women. We have had the opportunity to meet with Minister Hajdu on several occasions and look forward to continued dialogue. As part of the government's renewed engagement, five non-government representatives were selected to be on the government delegation at the March 2016 meeting of the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women. We were proud to be one of the five organizations.

We look forward to another pivotal year in our growth and with our provincial and territorial members, we will continue to work for both short and longer term change that will lead to better outcomes for women and their children and an eventual end to violence against women.

Lise Martin
Executive Director

Manon Monastesse
Co-Chair

Jan Reimer
Co-Chair

2015-16

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

- We launched ShelterSafe.ca
- We had our 1st in person Board meeting
- We carried out 5 focus groups
- We launched our new website at endvaw.ca
- We were selected as an NGO delegate on the government delegation to the CSW at the United Nations
- We presented the Blueprint for a National Action Plan on Violence against Women to the Minister of Status of Women
- We completed our Practice Exchange Project and published an accompanying manual
- We continued to build a diverse base of supporters

COLLABORATION

The Network has acted in an advisory capacity in several projects.

- Violence Education Guidance Action Project / PreVAil Research Network
- Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative for Vulnerable Populations / Western University and University of Guelph
- Activating Social Change. “You Are Not Alone” toolkit / Native Women’s Association of Canada
- Domestic Violence at Work Network / Centre for Research & Education on VAW & Children
- Believe-Ask-Connect Phase II / Pauktuutit
- Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women in Canada / DAWN Canada

SHELTERS SAFE.CA

FINDING SAFETY 24/7

Launched in June 2015, ShelterSafe.ca is an online tool that provides reliable and accurate information on how you can access help, 24/7, wherever you are in the country. We let women know that it is not their fault and that they are not alone.

“The most typical experience for victims of domestic violence is isolation. A map indicating hundreds of points of light, of hope, of safety and escape is more than a tool. It is a reminder that you are not alone, it is a reminder that whether you live in a large urban centre or in a remote community, there is domestic violence and that there are resources that can help.”

- *Shelter Director*

Providing safety through reliable and accurate information was made possible in large part due to the generosity of our two founding partners - the RBC Foundation and the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.

“ Before I called, I had no idea what I was going to do. Now I have a plan and I know where to start.
- *Shelter user and abuse survivor*

SHELTER VOICES

AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF SHELTERS

The voices and messages in our third annual survey were heard loud and clear across the country with a feature story in the Globe and Mail, radio interviews on CBC in 14 different cities and an article by the Canadian Press.

On snapshot day, 38% of shelters were full. Far too often, shelters in Canada are at capacity and having to turn women and children away. Of the women in shelters on snapshot day, 110 had been threatened with a gun and 148 were pregnant.

“ I remember riding that bus with my little boy with nowhere to go and no one to turn to. Thank you for being there for me. I will never forget this.
- *Shelter user and abuse survivor*

“ A woman has talked about returning to her abuser because no landlord seems to be willing to rent to her because she is on social assistance and has several children. - *Shelter worker*

“ The women we serve are taking back control over their own lives. They become more aware of their own needs, and better equipped to respond. Overall, women gain the desire to achieve an independent life and keep their children from experiencing further violence. - *Shelter worker*

PRACTICE EXCHANGE PROJECT

The 10 step Framework developed in this project helps shelter workers adapt promising practices from other shelters and sectors to meet their specific local needs.

Peer-to-peer learning is of great benefit to shelter workers who work tirelessly to help women and their children and to eventually bring an end to violence against women. The project's web page at www.endvaw.ca/pep includes a peer-sourced inventory of promising practices.

BLUEPRINT - CANADA'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Blueprint provides a roadmap to a federal-provincial National Action Plan in line with United Nations guidelines. A National Action Plan would go a long way in ensuring that women in all areas of the country have access to comparable levels of services and protection. Endorsed by over 180 organizations, the Blueprint is the result of collaboration with 21 partners. The document was presented to Canada's first standalone Minister for the Status of Women in February 2016.

WHO WE ARE

Board of Directors

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Ontario English Catholic
Teachers Association

Public Service Alliance
of Canada

United Food and
Commercial Workers

UNIFOR

United Steelworkers

Visit www.endvaw.ca to:

- learn more about the Network
- access our programs and reports
- read press releases and updates
- find out how to support our work

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The Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses is a registered charity:
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