

Robson Valley Community Services

Robson Valley, British Columbia

Key Insights:

- A common concern is that other residents will not feel safe staying in the same place with trans women. RCVS has found that the experience of violence matters more than a person's gender.
- Don't assume that community partners and other agencies are well-informed on gender and sexual diversity. You may need to do the teaching.



Shelter Profile: [Robson Valley Community Services](#) (RVCS) offers a range of services, including support and emergency shelter for women fleeing violence. Currently, they use hotel rooms to house women who require emergency shelter, but they have recently received the funding to construct a residence. They have two offices located in towns about an hour apart, and their service area extends 306km in one direction.

Making Changes: Staff at RCVS observed that in their small, rural community, the conversation about gender and sexual diversity is less prominent than it might be in an urban area. As a result, RCVS has been focusing on **raising awareness within their community** about the importance of people feeling safe being who they are. To do so, they have been working on actions that increase the visibility of the LGBT community, such as painting the pride flag on fire hydrants around the community. They are always looking out for **teachable moments**, both with their own support staff, the community, and other residents. They ask people where they found the information they are sharing or saying, and counter it by presenting facts describing the reality.



In addition to these awareness-raising activities, they have been working on making their own services more inclusive. They **updated their entire policy manual** to include an expanded definition of family that recognizes the importance of self-defined family. They have also updated their policy and external materials to use inclusive language, and they have updated their sexual harassment policy.

Overcoming Barriers: One of the main challenges RCVS faces is **the belief among some community members that there are no gender and sexually diverse people in their community**. In reality, people often hide their identity from the broader community because there is still a lot of **stigma**. This is particularly challenging because the small size of the community makes it easy for other people to know when an individual accesses RCVS services. RCVS hopes that by raising awareness, they can address these challenges.

RCVS is **still learning about gender and sexual diversity themselves**, and they do not have access to as many other resources or organizations in their community as an urban shelter might. They would like to bring a guest speaker to raise awareness within the community and the organization.

They also face challenges ensuring that their **partner agencies and other community organizations** are well informed about gender and sexual diversity, so that the whole continuum of services can be inclusive. For example, the officers at the RCMP detachment rotate every few years. RCVS continuously works on relationship-building and keeping partners informed.



“Right now we’re focusing on policy and teaching, so that when we build the transition house nothing comes as a shock.”