



BRIDGES

FOR WOMEN SOCIETY



2018-19 Annual Report

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Alison Watson - Board Chair

Message from the Board of Directors

We are pleased to share the Bridges for Women Society's 2018-2019 annual report with you.

Bridges has undergone some big changes this year, mainly due to shifts in Government and funding structures. We have moved from a data-recording heavy, fee for service funding structure to a core funding and contract based structure. It has been a transformation towards great authenticity. This also has meant that the staff has had to adjust to new ways of reporting and keeping statistics. It has been a process and we greatly appreciate the staff's ability to adjust and lean into the new ways of doing their jobs. They have continued to serve the women who come through our door with grace, compassion and efficiency.

The staff have also completed their 3-year training in Somatic Experience therapy, which is used with clients who have experienced trauma. We have heard from the staff that this ongoing training has been incredibly helpful for their work and we are more than happy to provide them with learning opportunities.

The Board and Staff also took part in a multi-day strategic plan, which was thorough and invigorating. The mission and vision statements were reviewed and collaboratively adjusted to reflect Bridges goals and purpose. Everyone involved felt a sense of connection during the planning sessions, where we got to openly discuss wishes and dreams for Bridges. The Board now has the next five-year strategic plan ready to go.

An enormous and endless thank you to the Bridges for Women staff, whose passion and commitment to improving lives is the lifeblood of the organization and has been since the start. Many thanks to our volunteers, mentors and fundraisers for the time and talent that they generously give to Bridges. This generosity is what enables Bridges to support clients on their journey towards financial independence and freedom from the impacts of trauma and abuse.

Finally, our Board of Directors has taken shape this year with some incredible new members joining our team. Having two new Board members join and take on big roles has been so appreciated and exciting. Danielle Worster is our new Secretary and Kristy Mineault is our Treasurer. Both of these incredible women have taken on new roles with gusto and enthusiasm. Our returning Board member, Stephanie Mannix is another powerhouse who we are so happy to have working with us. Thank you, thank you!

We continue to recruit for the Board of Directors and are looking forward to rounding out the membership for the coming years. Board work is dynamic, interesting and intriguingly challenging. We encourage women who are looking for a way to give back to the community and work with amazing, feminist women to reach out and apply to the Board.

We look forward to the next year of service to the women of Victoria!

Sincerely, Alison Watson, Board Chair



Message from the Interim Leadership Team

“Riding the waves of change.” For Bridges, this phrase summarizes a year of changes, challenges and triumphs while providing a safe and supportive environment for women who are impacted by trauma, abuse and violence.

The five-year term of the fee-for-service contract with the Employment Program of BC ended on March 31, 2019. In the preparation for the change, we entered into negotiations with the successful service providers for the new WorkBC contracts. During the early part of 2019, Bridges’ staff worked diligently to ensure a smooth transition with each client to address their individual needs and move towards financial independence.

On the lower end of Vancouver Island, we secured agreements with 3 services providers in different capacities, as third-party providers or sub-contractors. We will continue to provide services to women in Victoria, WestShore, Sooke and the Peninsula.

Across the province, we delivered online employment services in North Vancouver Island, Revelstoke and Salmon Arm. We are contracted with NIEFS in Campbell River to provide online services on the North Island starting April 1, 2019.

In addressing the need to deliver services for vulnerable populations, we began working with the BC Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training to inform the new specialized employment program supports and responded to the Ministry’s Call for Proposals for core funding.

We are excited to announce our success in a 5-year funding agreement with the federal Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) of \$1.25 million. Bridges is one of several non-profit recipients to receive this funding on Vancouver Island to help build capacity within the agency as well as evaluate our Indigenous Women’s program as a promising practice. In honour of this exciting initiative, Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality made the formal announcement from the Bridges’ office.

We would like to thank the Board of Directors, Bridges’ staff, funders, donors, volunteers and everyone who supports Bridges in so many ways. Our gratitude for understanding the work that we do, ending cycles of violence and making a meaningful difference in women’s lives.

With gratitude,

Julie Cormier, Patricia Rawson, & Carrie Everett

Message from the Financial Controller

Bridges for Women Society's fiscal year ended March 31, 2019, as a year of transitions. We experienced the winding down of our core program funding through the Employment Program of BC, and although this transition was anticipated, we experienced a revenue shortage of approximately \$125,000. Our careful cost controls and cashflow management could not prevent this year's resultant net deficit. However, the foresight of previous administrations in building healthy financial reserves greatly aided in our ability to maintain life-affirming programs through this challenging period.

Our programs provide women impacted by violence and trauma with the tools and support needed to move toward economic security and independence. We are thankful to have received recognition of our successful program model from all levels of government, having been awarded several significant grants, including multi-year funding from Indigenous Services Canada and Women and Gender Equality Canada. We are optimistic that the increased public awareness of the challenges women continue to face in our society will generate ongoing engagement of individuals and organizations to contribute to our fundraising efforts. Together, we can, and will continue, to provide impactful program development and delivery.

I am pleased to have joined Bridges for Women Society as the Financial Controller and extend my thanks, on behalf of the entire organization, to Chantal Barchard, my predecessor, whose work with the finance team has been invaluable. I appreciate the warm welcome I have received, from staff, the leadership team, the board of directors, and am honoured to be part of this dedicated, inspirational, and proudly feminist organization.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Elizabeth Skillings, CPA, CA

Financial Controller



Message from the Fund Development & Communications Manager

When I think about fundraising at Bridges, the photo below says it all – it takes a village! All of you play an essential role in the sustainability of healing and employment services for women impacted by violence and trauma.

It is thanks to our Bridges' community that local women continue to be supported in moving beyond the barriers and impacts of trauma. For this reason, the sight of all your bright faces at the International Women's Day Luncheon brings out the light and joy I get to experience in my role as Fund Development Manager.

Together, we fundraised 11% of the operating budget. Individuals, groups and businesses gave in different ways, including responding to donation appeals, dedicating monthly funds, attending our annual fundraiser, organizing gatherings, or taking the opportunity to showcase Bridges during their business events. In all the creative, meaningful ways people give to Bridges, they collectively raised a total of \$192,758. A special appreciation goes out to two leading women, Diane Erickson and Sybil Verch, who both provided significant top ups to our fundraising campaigns that allowed us to reach our financial targets.

The 2018-19 fiscal year also focused on seeking new and increased grant funds from service clubs, foundations and governments in anticipation of our core Ministry contract transition. This



focused effort was successful, resulting in a 37% increase in total grant revenue. These fundraising rewards include two grants from Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), formerly known as Status of Women Canada, resulting in \$1.25 million over the next five years. These two incredible opportunities are funding capacity building projects informed by our new strategic plan priorities, as well as, a significant program evaluation project to test our Indigenous Women's Bridging Program as a promising practice. The recognition of the federal government during this time of change has been incredibly affirming of our innovative, gutsy healing and employment model for women. We look forward to updating you all over the next few years on these projects.

Lastly, volunteers have played a big role in the agency's ability to undertake new and ongoing projects, this includes the time and hard work of our events volunteers at the International Women's Day Luncheon and other third-party events, the research and value-based planning of a social enterprise at Bridges by a Royal Roads student, and the continued work of updating our Community Resource Handbook by a group of University of Victoria students. Thank you, volunteers, as Bridges' 2018-19 successes could not have been reached without you.

I look forward to this new year and spending time connecting with the individuals of the Bridges' community to express our gratitude and love for their on-going support.

In solidarity,

Julie Cormier

Fund Development & Communications Manager



Trauma Counselling Services

Submitted by Gwen Davies

Our Counselling services are part of the integrated approach that Bridges takes to working with women who have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect in their lives. We look at trauma as resulting from disrupted and injured/injuring relationships in both childhood and adulthood, ongoing/sudden overwhelm due to violence, addiction, and lack of safety and resources.

Our team has been going through ongoing professional development which has resulted in certification as Somatic Experience counsellors. This has been an amazing experience for counsellors and facilitators. We have a tool that allows us to assess our client's nervous systems, to look at our curriculum and view our practices through a new lens.

We have continued to develop new revenue streams around the counselling program. We are funded by WorkBC, Crime Victims Assistance, RHAP (Residential Historical Abuse Program), Indigenous Bridging, Mentoring, and Advanced Education Survivors of Trauma.

As we reach out into community we have found that wait lists are huge and we are actively working with other community services to find ways to fund and respond to the ongoing need in our community.

Statistics:

- From April 1/18 to March 31/19 we have served 539 clients and delivered 1,625 one to one sessions.
- During this time, we lost four of our long-term counsellors to new work opportunities and relocation.
- We have closed the Employment Program of BC and have a new working relationship with WorkBC in communities across Vancouver Island.

Bridges Employment Program (BEP)

Facilitated by Wendy Schultz, Carrie Everett, and Patricia Rawson

The Bridges' Employment Program (BEP) is a 6-month, 3-day a week program that aids women who have been affected by abuse violence and neglect by giving them the support and tools they need to build economic independence.

The program has three start dates in the year - January, May, and September. During the first 4 months of the program, workshops include psycho-education, self-care, personal skills, healing from the impacts of trauma, building self-esteem and reclaiming identity. During the last 2 months, the students begin using the skills they have learned as they consider their next steps. Exciting times!! This time can be equal parts exciting and terrifying. Exciting because it may be the first time students have started, and worked through a program, dealt with past trauma, committed to healing work, been successful in a group, developed friendships with other women, and attended counselling regularly. And terrifying for some of the same reasons, plus this may be the first time they have actually seen a future, and the very real possibility of school or meaningful employment. Trauma has shown us, that some of the scariest things to do involve resume writing and job interviews, making decisions, and planning for the future.

Students have come from a wide range of backgrounds and experience but share a common history of trauma. Trauma can happen at any time in a woman's life, and impacts can be felt for many years after. Impacts of trauma may include over/under attaching in relationships; relationship issues in friendships, family, employment; disrupted education; learning disabilities; chronic low self-esteem; unclear sense of identity; over-blown sense of responsibility (often for the actions of others); deep shame; caretaking others at her expense; strong fight, flight, and/or freeze response; substance use or other addictive behaviors to cope with trauma pain; risky behaviors; mental health impacts such as depression, anxiety, panic attacks; fears; sleep disturbance; no sense of having a future; over-trust/under-trust; health issues; housing; poverty; lack of communication and boundary awareness or skill; as well as other impacts.



Trauma does not have to be a life sentence; healing is possible. As facilitators and counselors, we see on a daily basis: growth, hope restored, confidence bloom, coping skills employed, plans formed, future explored, and possibility awoken. We see friendships grow, a supportive classroom community evolving, and, amid uproarious laughter, our spirits are fed.

Successes and Highlights

This year has seen 85 women start BEP, with many continuing to employment, education, and other opportunities. We get to be part of many successes, big and small, and all of them are pivotal to the healing work we do. Success wears many faces; employment and education are outcomes we would love to see but success can also look like awakened creativity, getting up and out the door after disturbed sleep or crippling anxiety; it can be having a shower when depressed, or phoning in to Bridges when feeling sad, fearful and/or disconnected; it can be

using coping skills to ground emotions to be able to stay in the classroom when previous response would have been to run or quit; it can be daring to hope when everything looked dire.

Successes:

- After crippling health issues and chronic low self-esteem, client completed BEP and counselling, went forward with self-employment in her art career.
- BEP student started her own cleaning and organizing company and is feeling confidence and competence in self.
- BEP grad in her 3rd year of nursing school
- BEP grad finishing her upgrading and starting school in the trades.
- BEP grad has stable housing, is managing her anxiety, and is building a small group of friends for the first time.
- BEP grad who started over after an abusive marriage; has long term employment, and just bought her first car!
- BEP grad opened her own small business, while raising children and coping with past abuse.
- BEP Grad, after completing trades program, has high-paying job in a field she loves.

Employment Services Report

Facilitated by Carrie Everett and Patricia Rawson

The Employment Services Team had a busy and rewarding year! We were excited to offer our foundational career and employment services as well as enhanced services. Services were delivered as part of the Bridges Employment Program and one-to-one. We recognize it is the beautiful blend of both group-based and individualized services that lead to the most positive outcomes for our clients.

As in previous years, we offered job search and career planning services, vocational assessments, referrals to specialized psychological vocational assessments, assistance securing short course funding and post-secondary training plans, referrals to wage subsidy and more.

Our group-based employment services included workshops covering the following topics:

- Informational Interview Practice
- Interview Practice
- Experience Database (recognizing skills and accomplishments)
- Resume and Cover Letter writing
- Fear and Change
- Networking
- Career Presentations

“Hearing the different stories from each woman was very inspiring. Hearing that every path is different and never a straight line. Be patient and let your strengths lead the way.”

- Career Panel Feedback

Community and Employer Engagement

With thanks to dedicated volunteer mentors, local employers and valuable community members, we were able to offer more career panels, workplace tours, and engage in group-based volunteering. We have an ongoing relationship with Soap for Hope and local women-owned businesses who so graciously offer their wisdom and life experience as panelists.

Mentor Panelists represent the following industries:

- Graphic Design
- Non-profit Leadership
- Writing
- Health Care
- Photography
- Municipal Administration
- Hairdressing
- Entrepreneurship
- Community Development

Some Stats

- ♦ 79 clients found part-time or full-time employment
- ♦ 16 clients started post-secondary training



- ◆ 595 Career Assessments were administered

Client Outcomes



Leading from a client-centered, trauma-informed perspective, we are always mindful to meet women where they're at and work with them to identify and define what success looks like to them. Outcomes range from increased confidence in connecting with professionals, tangible job search skills and ability to assert their needs and set healthy boundaries. In addition to the above outcomes, we also see women take action towards securing employment, returning to post-secondary training, pursuing

their self-employment dreams and connecting to community through volunteerism and group involvement.

Some industries women are either working in, building a business in, or training in include:

- Artisan / Craftsperson
- Visual Arts
- Culinary Arts
- Mechanics (Automotive and Marine)
- Educational Assistant
- Home Support Worker
- Retail Sales and Management
- Provincial Government Administration
- Graphic Design
- Interior Design
- Veterinary Care
- Insurance
- Event Planning
- Social Work
- Office Administration

Testimonial

What were the most important learnings from the program?

"There's so many, but everything has greatly contributed to a better self awareness, more confidence, healing, help in getting 'unstuck.' I look forward to today and the future now."

-Bridges student

CORE Program Report

Facilitated by Kirsten Moline

CORE is the two-day a week Trauma-Informed Employability Program at Bridges' Victoria office. We have a very full room of committed clients, working on occupying space and integrating our curriculum content in a group setting. This 6-month long workshop series is not only meant to introduce clients to our trauma-informed curriculum, but also offers a focus on how to create safety within a group setting (and within themselves); how vital self-care is within the healing process; how to set and hold boundaries; how to communicate assertively; how to explore and value who they are as a unique individual; to learn about their strengths, skills, abilities and resilience; to find out about their own personality, learning and conflict styles; and to ultimately understand the impact of trauma & abuse, and how to heal. Due to CORE having an ongoing "open" intake status, these clients have had more opportunity to navigate change as there are new people entering and leaving the group at different times. This navigation increases their ability to strengthen the "muscle" of flexibility, malleability and allows them to practice all their learnt coping and grounding strategies. It is a joy to facilitate this group.



Indigenous Women's Programs

Submitted by Jackie LeBlanc, Mary Stocks, and Dianne de Champlain

Urban Indigenous Women's Program

by Jackie LeBlanc

An eight-session, bi-weekly program from August 24, 2018 to November 30, 2018. This program was designed to strengthen the connection between Urban Indigenous Women with other Urban Indigenous Women and with Indigenous culture and traditional activities to promote healing in community.

This group provided an opportunity for many of the participants to experience for the first time local traditional crafts and protocols, such as working with cedar and territorial acknowledgement.

- ◆ Program Statistics – 12 applications were received, seven participants started, and five graduated.
- ◆ Highlights – Highlights of the group were a medicine walk in the Cowichan Valley, Eagle Feather Teachings, drum making, and sharing in circle.

All participants enjoyed engaging in traditional Indigenous crafting activities. Many participants also participated in the Métis Women's Program.

Tsartlip Nation Women's Bridging Program

by Mary Stocks

Bridges was privileged to be invited to host a group in the Tsartlip community from September 2018 to March 2019. Six women participated in the program with support from the Tsartlip Community Prevention Worker. Bridges provided access to counselling and a welcoming weekly group to support participants in taking the steps necessary to increase safety and stability in their lives and to move closer to their goals.

A highlight of the program included the graduation, where participants were honored by a room full of elders, friends and their Chief Don Tom.

Métis Women's Bridging Program

by Dianne de Champlain

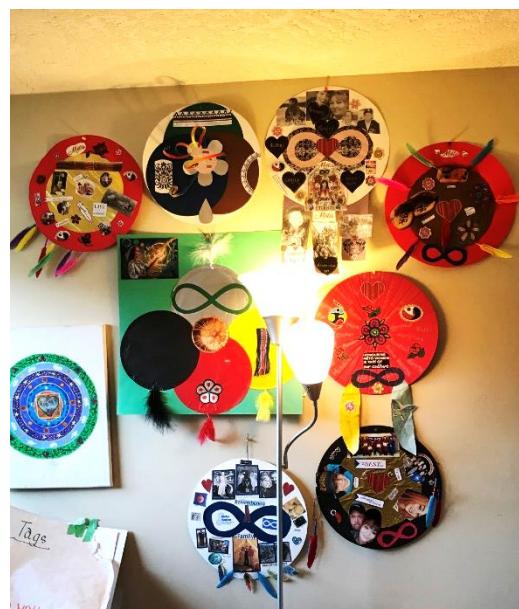
As part of the National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund funding, Victoria Pruden, ED, has been designing a Bridging Program for Métis Women that addresses trauma, fractured identity, personal healing and development and employability skills. She has also been creating and refining curriculum based on blending of culture, language, and identity.

Victoria has been very active in outreach, presenting locally, provincially and federally to share information and successes of the Bridges Métis Women's Program. In May, Bridges hosted the Métis Women of BC Provincial Council and shared an overview of outcomes and curriculum. In June, meetings were held with the Status of Women staff in Ottawa, the Minister of Indigenous

Affairs, and ICS staff and healing cards and Métis program outcomes were shared. In September, the Bridges Model for Métis Women's Healing and Empowerment was presented at the Provincial Métis Women's Conference and featured a graduate of Bridges Métis Women's Program as a speaker, and the curriculum was shared with delegates. In October, Victoria delivered a workshop on "Lateral Kindness" to 120 national delegates at Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) National Meeting.

Métis Women's Program participants volunteered at a booth giving away healing cards, and sharing their experience of the women's program at Island Métis Rendezvous at Cowichan Valley Exhibition grounds.

As part of the funding, several large group activities were delivered in the 2018-19 fiscal year:



August 26th Graduates connecting circle and potluck event, Bridges for Women. Focus, Métis Crafts, Kitchen party, and reducing isolation. Bridges for Women Staff, and Bridges Métis Women's Program Graduates 2017-2018

October 9th Métis Women's Circle for Grads, Community Women, and future students
Who are we? Reflecting on Métis Identity; Métis Identity Collage / Shield Project
31 pre-registered, 17 participants

October 19 Drum Making Circle for Grads and New Participants at WestShore location; 4 hours
12 pre-registered, 7 participants

January 12 Journey Dolls – full-day 14 participants

April 27-28 Traditional Beading – 2 days

In addition, eight Métis Women's Circle Evenings at Bridges for Women for grads, current students, Elders, Mentors with Metis Nation of Greater Victoria (MNGV), alternating with evening feasts and workshops for grads, elders, and new students to build trauma-informed women's community were held.

In addition, Victoria, Jackie LeBlanc and Dianne de Champlain co-facilitated 19 weekly sessions, held at the WestShore location. The meetings were 3 hours with 8-10 participants attending. An elder attended each session and offered smudging and an opening prayer. Participants took turns providing a reflective grounding activity as part of the opening. The design of the program was a blend of cultural activities and traditional crafting and selected topics from the Bridges curriculum that were adapted to include cultural awareness. We ended each session with sharing a meal together.

The topics covered included hopes and fears, the impact of trauma, grounding, self-care, communication, setting boundaries, the drama and empowerment triangles, setting intentions, self-compassion, positive self-talk, change, and talking papers. We were conscious to use a Métis lens to understand how history, oppression, traditional practices, and culture were related to these topics and re-designed the curriculum accordingly.

Victoria led a very moving Métis Sashing our Warriors ceremony. Elders Bertha and Joe Landrie visited and shared the history and cultural values of Métis. They also gave us a brief practice learning to play spoons and jig dance. We also watched Moccasin Flats, a NFB film.

Members would often work on beading while they participated. We invited Christine Aday to attend some sessions to teach about some Coast Salish traditions with cedar. She shared teachings about how integral cedar is with the Coast Salish traditions, and taught us how to split cedar. We used the materials to make cedar roses and made sure to collect all remnants to return to the earth.



We held a graduation ceremony and each participant wore the ribbon skirts that were made in the previous year and each was presented with a red Métis sash. The talking papers were very moving. Three of the members have joined Bridges BEP program, and several have participated in counselling with Jackie. Several members of the group continue to meet at Sneq'wa (Blue Heron) e'lun (House) at Roads at a beading group.

For our final meeting, Christine Aday organized a very special outing to her family's home where the group learned how to harvest cedar and the care needed to maintain the tree. She also showed us how to identify and safely harvest plants and roots – raspberry leaves, stinging nettle, licorice fern roots which were used to make the tea for lunch and stinging nettle greens. We had a beautiful lunch with salmon and bannock and berry jam around a campfire – a memorable closing for our group!

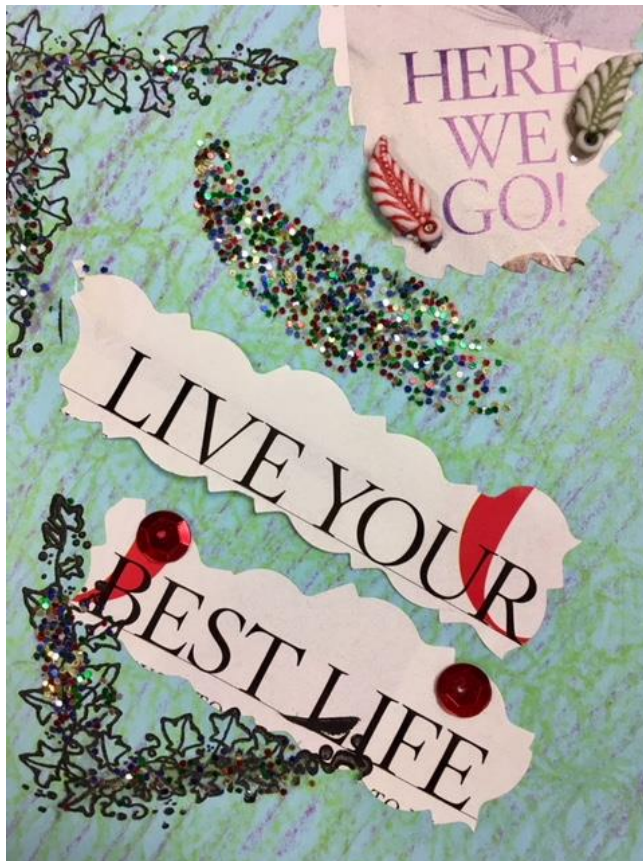
Program Intakes

Facilitated by Kristin Bulger and Mary Stocks

Over the past year, over 500 first contacts were conducted (initial screenings) and close to 300 intake sessions were done. A total of at least 220 people were accepted into our programs. People may be ineligible for services based on various factors, including contract-based eligibility criteria and/or not being ready for Bridges programming.

Barriers preventing people from receiving an intake appointment at the downtown location: (monthly average)

Prevents participation	Average Number
No follow through	7
Major mental health issues	1
Physical health prevents participation	<1
Still involved in an abusive relationship	1
Just out of an abusive relationship	2
Active addiction	1
General lack of stability, including housing	3
Full-time employee or student	2
Not interested in employment services	2
More appropriate for other agencies such as ICA/GT Hiring	4



One of the biggest factors we saw impact our numbers in the latter part of the fiscal year, was a change in funding contracts, which limited our ability to provide 1:1 employment services. Many of the women calling for services are not comfortable in a group setting and/or group is not appropriate for them, and therefore this change in service delivery has impacted some of whom we are able to serve.

We continue to see a rise in the number of returning clients, which under the Employment Programs of BC (EPBC) funding model, often prevented us from being able to renew the service options available (such as the ten counselling sessions). We have also seen a rising number of women seeking services who lack stable housing and/or who identify as homeless. Those seeking services sometimes have needs beyond the scope of our resources, such as serious mental health issues or active addiction challenges. When women do not meet eligibility criteria, we make every effort possible to redirect them to other appropriate resources, which can be

exceedingly difficult at times because: agencies who offer Stopping the Violence counselling have extraordinarily long waitlists (around 6-9 months), there is an extreme housing shortage in Victoria, and there is a scarcity of mental health and addiction supports in the community (for example, USTAT [Urgent Short Term Assessment and Treatment through VIHA] will only accept individuals with suicidal ideation and there is about a 6-week waitlist).

Word-of-mouth continues to be the primary method of referral, followed by our outreach efforts to various community agencies. Intake calls come in waves throughout the year and, considering the nature of trauma, the percentage of women following through with services is considerably high (an expected challenge). In terms of income source, the largest group of women is on PWD followed by employment obligated women on income assistance. The age spread of clients is 19 – 72. Most of our clients have some college/university, followed by a grade 12 level education, a college diploma, and a Bachelor's degree. Bridges for Women continues to serve as many people as possible to accelerate the healing process, reach new levels of personal empowerment, and achieve a higher level of independence through supportive wrap-around programming by staff members who genuinely care.

Bridges Online Program

Submitted by Christine Anacleto and Kristin Bulger

This past year has brought ups and downs for the Bridges for Women Online Program. Briana Mikkelson has been off on maternity leave since November 2018, and Stephanie Pedneault managed the online program on her own for much of this term. Stephanie whole-heartedly continued to engage with women in our various catchment areas throughout Victoria, Sooke, WestShore, the Peninsula, Campbell River, Port McNeil, Sayward, Cortes Island, Quadra Island, Cumberland, Salmon Arm and Revelstoke, finding creative ways to meet the diverse needs for safety, genuine connection, increasing knowledge and skill development of diverse women from a distance.

Stephanie took an outreach trip in the Winter to Salmon Arm and Revelstoke to continue to raise awareness of our program and strengthen our partnerships with the Employment Programs of BC (EPBC) partners there. Outreach trips are a wonderful opportunity to make authentic connections, answer questions, and offer education about the impacts of trauma on employability. This outreach trip garnered a lot of interest and we did see an increase in referrals for clients in those catchment areas. Unfortunately, with the end of EPBC contracts, and new WorkBC contracts in March of 2019, our contract with that catchment area was not renewed.

In our North Island catchment, we have continued to experience a thriving and strong partnership with both the Campbell River Women's Resource Centre and the North Island Employment Foundation (NIEFS). Through these relationships, the weekly group at the Women's center has evolved into a consistent and strong touchstone for Bridges students in the Campbell River area. The diverse women who attend the group gather together every Friday to explore the Bridges curriculum while receiving connection and support. We are fortunate to have a skilled and compassionate staff member from the Women's Resource Center facilitate the group.

This collaborative partnership has allowed us to deliver more client centered services from a distance.

This year, we accepted 39 women into our online program, in various capacities. Each woman working through this program is assessed for her current level of safety, readiness, needs, and wants. We are then able to create a tailored plan of connecting via email, regular phone check-ins, online program coursework, and/or group participation, as she makes her own self-determined steps forward. We are hopeful to see continued growth and success in the Bridges for Women Online Program as we move forward.



Bridges for Women, WestShore

Submitted by Dianne de Champlain

WestShore is a fast-growing community and in our 5 years on the WestShore, we continue to increase our intakes. We are located at the lower level of the Chamber of Commerce in Langford. We are able to access the lovely Veteran's Memorial Park – being close to nature is important for women who are healing. We are working on renovations to provide a better counselling space.

We were pleased to welcome Jackie to the counselling team! She has been working both downtown and at WestShore and has facilitated both the Urban Indigenous program and the Metis group.

BEP workshops, weekly drop-in classes, assessments, one-to-one workshops and counselling form the foundation of our program. We also offered orientation and grounding classes for participants who were not able to attend groups. We were also pleased to have Carrie from the employment team come out biweekly to conduct workshops on workplace topics and meet with women individually to assist them in their career planning.

This year, we held 3 graduations to celebrate those who completed the workshops in BEP. The first graduation was integrated into the first week of the new classes so that new participants could witness that BEP is a powerful place for women to learn and heal together and change their lives. Of those who graduated in the first groups, 8 are working, and one is taking university classes and plans to apply for dental hygiene.

Camosun College education upgrading classes continue to be a highlight of our offerings, with 18 participants taking the basic Computers 030 course and then continuing to complete various levels of English. This is a major life change for most participants, as their education was disrupted, and many assumed they were not able to acquire post-secondary education. We appreciate Camosun's outreach and recognizing people need a safe and supportive place to begin college classes. Success builds confidence and opens career options for women that would not otherwise be available to them.

Bridges for Women, Sooke

Submitted by Carrie Everett

Bridges had another very successful year providing a suite of individual and group services to women living in the Sooke area. We extend our gratitude to the WorkLink team for continuing to partner with us and welcome us so warmly into their space. The ability to provide services in Sooke is always notable, as it allows women in that community to access trauma-informed support services that they otherwise may not be able to access. While we have an office in Langford, the commute between the two communities presents a significant challenge, particularly for single parents and those with mental health and mobility challenges.

This year, we continued to offer the Bridges Employment Program (BEP), individual counselling, advocacy support, and employment and career development supports which included career exploration, post-secondary planning, job search services and access to funding for retraining. Additionally, through our long-term partnership with Camosun College, Adult Basic Upgrading was delivered out of the Sooke-based WorkLink office; courses included English, Math and Computer Skills. We are very proud of the strong relationship we continue to hold with Camosun College's School of Access.

As a result of Employment Program of BC funding changes, we found ourselves winding down our group and individual case management services at the end of this fiscal year. We hope to once again deliver our full range of services this next fiscal year. In the meantime, individual counselling is continuing thanks to our stable partnership with WorkLink Employment Society.

Throughout the 2018-2019 year, we served 34 women out of the Sooke office. Outcomes included women returning to school and securing part-time and full-time employment. Two clients were transferred to WorkLink at the end of our contract with the goal of securing funding to proceed with post-secondary training. Most notably, women expressed a deeper sense of self-worth, healing from trauma, reconnection to vocational passions and deeper connection to members of their community. These outcomes cannot be underestimated.

Counselling

Submitted by Mary Stocks

During our regular Sooke staff member's maternity leave, staffing turnover and the funding shifts this year, we have been able to offer counselling in Sooke on a weekly basis. Some clients from Sooke have ventured to the WestShore office in order to access the Bridges Employment Program (BEP) group. We hope to offer a BEP group in Sooke this coming winter when the regular staff member returns.

Over the past year we have provided 58 sessions of counselling for the impacts of trauma to women in Sooke.

Thank you, Contractors, Funders, and Partners,

Thanks to you, Bridges delivers quality healing, education and employment programs that are strength-based and trauma-informed in Greater Victoria and North Island. Thanks to you, women who have been impacted by violence and trauma have a safe, confidential place to go at no cost.

Contractors



Employment Program of British Columbia (EPBC) – Subcontracted by GT Hiring Solutions, North Island Employment Foundations Society (NIEFS), WorkLink Employment Society and Beacon Community Services

Funders



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness



United Way of Greater Victoria – City of Victoria – Thrifty Foods – BC Gaming Commission – BC Ministry of Public Safety and Emergency Services – NIB Trust Fund – Rotary Club of Westshore – First Nations Health Authority – Women and Gender Equality Canada

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