

# TRANSITIONS



PROVIDING CRISIS & TRANSITIONAL SERVICES FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE & ABUSE

DECEMBER 2011

## Story from a THANS Shelter

### Mi'kmaw family Healing Centre

Amy (*not a real name -this is a composite of a number of women's stories*) is leaving her home on the Millbrook Reserve, where she has lived for seven years. Her relationship with her partner has been a tumultuous one for several years now. She and her children need to leave the home for safety reasons. They come to the Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centre (MFHC) in Millbrook.

When Amy arrives she is distraught: she has had to leave her home, she has no money and has uprooted the children from school. The Healing Centre staff understand her fear and concerns and welcome her into the house and show her the room where she and the children will be staying. Amy drinks the cup of tea that is offered and sits down with the women's counselor to talk about her situation and go through the intake process. Her children are busy with the children's counselor to give mom time to talk alone.

With lots of care, support and information, Amy begins to feel better. In the next couple of days she decides on a plan of action, including contacting the band office to see

who has the matrimonial rights to the house. As is often the case, her partner has rights to their home so the counselor helps her find a new place to live off-reserve, because there is no housing available on reserve. Applications to family court for custody of the children are made. The MFHC staff put Amy in touch with the other resources she will need to get the kids in school and to get assistance to get back on her feet. The in-house counselors teach her about family violence and how it is affecting her life and children. A safety plan is put in place for when she is not at the Centre and when she leaves the Centre.

(*Several months later*) Amy is very thankful for the safety provided by the MFHC. That safety created an environment in which she was finally able to leave the abusive relationship. Amy learned a lot about relationships, parenting, stress management and other strategies, and is now in her new home, with her children. The outreach counselor still works with her on a weekly basis for any further programming and as a support person when she needs it.

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**Bleeding Heart**, from *Transformations through Layers*, last year's modified art therapy project, made possible by the Paula Gallant Memorial Fund. Thank you to Lynn & Lana and their families and friends.

## 2010 Statistics

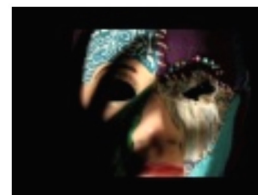
The nine THANS Member Shelters funded by the Department of Community Services have a total of 132 beds. In 2010 just under 1000 individuals stayed in the nine shelters. Staff responded to thousands of crisis, information, advocacy and safety planning calls. Most women and children stayed only once (87%) for an average stay of 21 days. Of the others, 10% stayed twice, and the other 3% stayed three or more times. Of those individuals, about a third were Moms, with a total of 354 children. Their reasons for service ranged from physical abuse, to financial and psychological abuse, and sexual violence by their intimate partners. In 2010, 21% of our service users return to their abusive partners, at least temporarily.

**You DO NOT have to be a resident of a transition house to receive services from our shelters:**

About one third of the women we serve continue to access services after they leave the shelter. Another 500 women, who had never been residents, accessed outreach and group services last year. Staff on our 24/7 toll free phone lines responded to hundreds of distress calls. Services that can be provided by phone include safety planning, supportive counseling, information and referrals and emergency responses to high risk situations. Some of our shelters offer children's outreach and a variety of summer camps for children of our service users or other children in our rural communities.

FROM

## Putting a Face on Abuse Art Project 2009



### DID YOU KNOW?

- Many of our rural shelters accept homeless women if there are beds available
- Women who experience other types of familial violence or abuse (other than intimate partner) can access our outreach services and residential services, if there are beds available.
- We work with women who have experienced sexual assault

To contact one of our organizations , go to  
<http://www.thans.ca/Content/FindShelter>

## Purple Ribbon Campaign



An annual campaign coordinated by THANS

November 25 – December 10 to:

- *Remember the 14 women who died in Montreal on Dec 6, 1989*
- *Remember all women who have died violently or continue to live with abuse*
- *Raise awareness of the far-reaching effects of violence against women*
- *Raise funds for organizations providing services to abused women*

Susan was hesitant at first to call the local THANS shelter. As an African Nova Scotian woman living in a rural part of Nova Scotia, she was keenly aware of the prejudice and pre conceived notions surrounding her family. To ask for help in making decisions about the abuse in her relationship, to say to someone outside of her family and community, to admit she needed support to keep her family safe was very hard. When Susan's co-worker and friend suggested she call to meet with an outreach worker, Susan was surprised, as she thought the transition house offered only shelter.

When Susan called the crisis line and arranged to meet with an outreach worker at the transition house, it was a great relief to hear the woman on the phone ask if she was currently safe. She told the worker that she felt she was, as her partner was staying with family who were aware of their situation. She also identified to the worker that she had the support of her pastor who was checking in on her on a regular basis. The worker on the phone offered to do safety planning with her as an extra support until she could meet with the outreach worker.

The day Susan met with the outreach worker they discussed Susan's options. They talked about where Susan already had support such as her family, her community and her church. Susan also talked about how it felt safe to have a confidential space to talk about the challenges she faced. As Susan left the shelter she noticed children in the yard playing. The faces reflected to her that this was a place of support for both her and her children.

*(This is a composite story of a number of women's experiences)*



## Bill C-19, An Act to Abolish the Gun Registry

### *A Story from Chrysalis House*

The East Coast Coalition, of which THANS is a part, opposes Bill C-19. This Bill will abolish the Gun Registry, and destroy years of data and essentially wash the billions that were spent to make women safer, down the drain.



*If this bill passes in its current state, it will:*

- **Remove the requirement** that gun owners' licenses be verified when they purchase a firearm;
- **End the registration** of rifles and shotguns, including the military-style semi-automatic Ruger Mini-14 used in the Montreal Massacre and in the recent shootings in Norway;
- **Enable individuals to acquire an unlimited number of guns**, including powerful semi-automatics, without coming to the authorities' attention that they may be planning to commit some heinous act, or sell them to criminals;
- **Eliminate the requirement that gun dealers must record who purchases new firearms**, a measure that has been in place in one form or another for more than 30 years and is essential for enabling crime guns to be traced and for prosecuting people who distribute guns to unlicensed criminals;
- **Destroy the records** of the 7.1 million rifles and shotguns that are currently registered, which will cripple the police's ability to trace any of these guns to their last legal owners if they end up being used in crimes; and,
- **Take away a tool used by police officers** virtually every day to enforce prohibition orders, take preventive actions, and remove guns from dangerous people.

During the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women, it would be a shame to lose Canada's Gun Registry, which has been a living legacy to the 14 women murdered in the Montreal Massacre in 1989. We have a new Domestic Violence Action Plan in NS. Let us strengthen it by attempting to keep the Gun Registry and if that is not possible, to keep the data, so that it could be reinstated under a new federal government. We know you believe in the safety of women. Call, write or email your MP and your Senator. On behalf of women and their families in NS, please take a stand on Bill C-19.

## FAST FACTS

1978

Bryony House, the first shelter in Nova Scotia, opened in Halifax.

2010

The NS Domestic Violence Action Plan was released

## ABOUT THANS

Transition Houses grew out of an identified need of women for safety and support in spousal abuse situations. The first transition house in Nova Scotia opened in Halifax in 1978, and the provincial association was incorporated in 1989. The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) member organizations provide crisis and transitional services to women (and their children) who are experiencing violence and abuse, including culturally relevant services to Mi'kmaw people. THANS eleven member organizations work with women and their children in thirteen locations across Nova Scotia; Sydney, Waycobah, Port Hawkesbury, Antigonish, New Glasgow, Amherst, Truro, Millbrook, Halifax, Bridgewater, Yarmouth, Digby and Kentville.

Our organizations provide a full range of support services to women and their children in a safe, supportive environment and provide survivors of violence with opportunities to learn about available resources and alternatives to facilitate informed personal choices and decisions.

Poverty, lack of safe supportive affordable housing, lack of childcare, literacy, education, transportation, and court support are frequent barriers that prevent our service users from moving forward in their lives. THANS works from a feminist-based perspective that seeks to work collaboratively with other community organizations and the three levels of government, as allies, in addressing these barriers and eliminating violence against women.



**Canadian Network of Women's Shelters & Transition Houses**  
*United to end violence against women*

*The World can change when women come together around a common vision.*

Several years ago, the provincial, territorial, regional and Aboriginal organizations representing women's shelters and transition houses recognized that though each served and supported the shelters and transition houses in their respective regions, no organization existed to do the same at a national level.

There simply was no national forum in which the leaders and members of these organizations could share ideas and resources. There was no space for them to learn and innovate together to advance the high quality of the services they offer. There was no unified voice for women's shelters and transition houses on the national stage to help generate systemic change.

In 2009, drawn together by a shared vision to end violence against women, these 14 organizations formed the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses. Together we became a national, collaborative voice for change.

*The Transition House Association of Nova Scotia is a founding member of the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses.*

### A Message to my Abuser

*I left with nothing – I gained everything.  
I have changed my life.  
I have changed my child's life.  
I have achieved things I never thought possible.*

*You told me I couldn't do it.  
I did it.  
I am doing it.  
I will keep doing it.*

*~A Survivor of Intimate Partner Violence*