

Vancouver Women's Health Collective



ANNUAL REPORT

1998 - 1999

Vancouver Women's Health Collective
219 - 1675 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V6J 1V2
Canada

MISSION STATEMENT

Women's experiences show that the established health care system undermines and denies the needs of women; therefore, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective will lobby and advocate to change the established health care system and provide women with resources to make their own health care choices.

VWHC GOALS

- to actively work on racism, ageism, heterosexism, classism and discrimination against people with disabilities within and outside the collective
- to create an environment that increases participation in and use of the collective and to ensure that both reflect the diversity of our society
- to work in a healthy way on issues of power and conflict within the collective
- to support and actively practice taking care of ourselves within the collective
- to strive to be a self-sufficient structure while remaining autonomous and not being compromised by funding sources
- to actively participate in information exchange and support with individuals and groups locally and globally who share our perspective
to support every woman's right to continue or terminate pregnancy
- to engage in education and consciousness-raising around issues of reproductive choice
- to create an active and representative women's health lobby to create change in the health care system by exposing the roots of corruption and power imbalances in the established health care industry
- to value and promote knowledge about health based on women's tradition and experience

GOALS

- to promote the vision that women are more than the sum of their reproductive parts
- to provide a broad range of health-related resources and a critical analysis of the established health care system, thereby offering options by which women can make their own health care decisions
- to inspire, support the development of, and engage in an ongoing exchange with issue-specific self-help, support and educational groups which, although functioning independently of the collective, share our philosophy and values
- to continue to develop our understanding of health and healing through the critique of the "disease model" of health and promotion of a model based on the mind/body/spirit that addresses women-identified health problems
- to actively respond to and expose the ways that the health care system perpetuates violence against women

THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS • 1998-1999

BC Ministry of Women's Equality
Vancouver/Richmond Health Board
BC Gaming Commission
City of Vancouver

VWHC MEMBERS

Jean Adler • Fatma Aktary • Uta Araj's • Karen Barber • Irene Barr •
 Barbara Bell • Liz Bennett • Sonia Bilkhu • Susan Boroevich • Chantelle
 Boulanger • Boundary Women's Coalition • P. Lynn Buhler • Judith Burke •
 Elizabeth Burrell • Diane J. Burton • Campbell River Women's Centre •
 Christine Campbell • Kristen Campbell • Patricia Casquet • Cathy Chabot •
 Ahlay Chin • Judy Chrysler • Gail Clement • Sharon Coates • Mary Ann
 Code • Melanie Conn • Tamara Cowan • Cranbrook Women's Centre •
 CREO Products Ltd. • Inez Curl • Naznin Dawoodi • Lynda Dechief • A.S.
 Doherty • E.K. Dolan • Deb Eilers • Erin Elliott • Daun Famulak • Renee
 Fernandez • Pam Fichtner • Marlene Finlayson • Nadine Fletcher •
 Tamara Flick-Parker • Kelli Forster • Moira Fulton • Monique Genton •
 Carole Gerson • Ruth Goodman • Mary Gordon • Angela Gray • Carla
 Grundison • Heather Hall • Lu Hansen • Muriel Harris • Virginia Hayes •
 Terrie Hendrickson • Lisa Herbert • F.A. Hillier • Donna Hilton • Darby
 Honeyman • Margot Howell • Louise Hudson • Hana Hussein • Janet Ilin
 Mou • Janet Ip • Ishtar Transition Housing Society • Farah Jahangir •
 Mary Johnson • Susan Johnstone • Faith Jones • Liz Kalt • Gaitry Kaul •
 Meredith Kimball • Nancy Kleiber • Beverley Kort • W. Krayenhoff •
 Mary Kruger • Lorraine Kuchinka • Sadie Kuehn • Cat L'Hirondelle • Twyla
 Lalonde • Helen Lane • Carol Latter • Tammy Lawrence • Diane LeClaire •
 Sharon Lee • Margaret Leitner • Kalia Leslie • Ann Liebau • Barb Little •
 Monica Loewi • Cynthia Lopatka • Carla Maraks • Wendy Masui Palumbo •
 Donna MacDermot • Raine McKay • Mary Anne McWaters • Sara Menzel
 • Ann-Marie Menzies • Anne Merrett-Hiley • Statia Michaels • Anne
 Mills • Jane Munro • Silvia Musholt • K. Ochs • Rhodea Omler • Diane
 Payette • Sue Penfold • Penticton & Area Womens Centre • Tricia Phillips
 • Maureen Picone • Reva Potashin • Claar Prinsen • Barbara Ray • Lynn
 Redenbach • Heather Reid • Janet Riehm • Anna Rinaldo • Joan Robillard
 • Pamela Rogers • Sunita Romeder • Patti Roshy • Adrianne Ross •
 Winona Rowat • Amy Rubin • Jane Rule • Safe Haven Transition House •
 Marg Scott • Marion Smith • South Surrey/White Rock Women's Place •
 Elena St. John • Patreace Athena Starr • Nicola Stewart • Eunice
 Stronach • Veronica Strong-Boag • Frances Suski • Inga Thomson • Diane
 Trovato • Nina Tryggvason • Helen Turbett • Karen Van Biesen • Linda
 Viologo • Elaine Walkden • Linda Ward • Lorna Watson • Marlene Wells •
 Susan Wendell • E.M. Wheeler • Vanessa Wiebel • Janet Wiegand • Lynn
 Wyminga • Anne Zavalkoff

1998 - 99 STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Marion Smith -- President
Tamara Flick-Parker -- Vice-President
Kelli Forster -- Secretary
Christine Campbell & Tamara Cowan -- Co-Treasurers
Tamara Flick-Parker -- Education Committee
Lynn Wyminga & Angie Gray -- Newsletter
Tamara Cowan & Debra Eilers -- Information Centre
Kelli Forster -- Volunteer Committee
Christine Campbell -- Publicity Committee
Elaine Walkden -- WHIN Committee

STAFF

Anna-Lisa Boye
Caryn Duncan

COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVOCATE STAFF

Brenda Kent
Roberta Sciarretta

CLEANING STAFF

Jennifer Kolarik
Pamela Rowe

SUMMER STUDENTS

Candice Bennett
Elaine Walkden

YEAR IN REVIEW

Throughout 1998/99, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective continued to provide health information to women through our Information Centre, various committees, and our newsletter, *Infusion*. The year took us into the community to a far greater degree than has been the case in the recent past.

Information Centre volunteers helped women help themselves by assisting women with their search for information about their health care needs. Information Centre volunteers responded to women's telephone inquiries about a range of health issues. The collective served at least 1500 women through our Information Helpline and at the Information Centre. As well, the Information Centre began accepting health questions by e-mail.

Additionally, women's organizations, community groups, health practitioners, and individual women held meetings, training sessions, support groups, and yoga classes at the collective. The VWHC continued to provide office support and a physical location for two Shiatsu practitioners, the Pro-Choice Abortion Network, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (BC), and the Midwives Association of BC.

One measure of the success of the VWHC's programs is the demand for our services. The resources at the Information Centre were in ever-increasing demand by Lower Mainland women last year. As well, we continued

to receive calls from women across the province and the country interested in our health practitioner files, our health centre model, and in setting up similar services for women in their communities. The Community Health Advocate Project was also enthusiastically supported by women's and community organizations wishing to train women as advocates.

In 1998/99, numerous organizational, administrative, and budgetary changes were implemented at the Vancouver Women's Health Collective. The collective re-evaluated a number of administrative expenses with the objective of reducing these costs and redirecting resources to better serve the women who rely on the VWHC for their health information. The re-organization of the collective space resulted in a silent auction for volunteers, as well as our donation of "outdated" computer and office equipment to a women's centre in Cuba. The financial picture for the collective is stable. Though, as is the case with most non-profit organizations, we are always trying to do more with limited resources.

In the last twelve months, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective has been busy serving the needs of women. Women continue to seek health information, and the collective continues to serve the vital role of health information provider. We are looking forward to a smooth year ahead building on the strengths of 1998/99.

INFORMATION CENTRE COMMITTEE

As usual, it was a busy year at the Information Centre. We welcomed new volunteers and bid farewell to others. This flux of energy has ensured that the Information Centre remains a vital and exciting place to visit and also to be involved with. Staffed exclusively by volunteers, the Information Centre was open 16 hours per week throughout 1998/99.

The Information Centre maintained its presence in the community by attending various events and workshops throughout the Lower Mainland. Also, students from a variety of disciplines such as nursing, women's studies and library science participated in practicums at the collective and lent their talents to the Information Centre.

In addition to the daily business of the Information Centre, new ideas and projects were brought to fruition:

- a number of current health related books and videos were purchased for the library
- the reception and library areas were reorganized to better display the new materials
- library books will now remain at the collective; borrowing privileges have been suspended except for specific cases
- a new system of cataloguing library books will begin in 1999
- the Health/Holistic Practitioner and Therapist Questionnaires and Evaluations were updated
- organizational documents were updated: call-in log; shift workers' manual; and pregnancy and childbirth resource list; etc.

- the cost of publications was reduced and we will carry a limited number of publications in the future
- health information files were streamlined
- the Info Centre is now on-line to take health-related comments and questions
- information sessions about the Community Health Advocate Project were held for volunteers in order to integrate the project with the collective's other services

In 1999/2000, we will be focusing on recruitment and retention of volunteers, and adequate and consistent staffing for bingo shifts and Information Centre shifts. We also look forward to working on the many projects and ideas brought forward by the volunteers and clients of the Information Centre. Through the initiative, commitment and hard work of all volunteers, the Information Centre will continue to promote informed, woman-centred, self-determined health care for the women of British Columbia.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee had a full and productive year. The training series held Saturday mornings included 10 sessions in 1998/99: Understanding Your Fertility Cycle; Pregnancy and Childbirth; Train the Trainer; One Brain System; Shiatsu; Homeopathy; Roling; and Midwives and Doulas. In addition to being

open to the public, the training sessions were intended to provide information for volunteers on topics which they identified an interest in.

Movie night was launched in August 1998. Movie nights were advertised in community newspapers and the following films were shown: *Killing Us Softly*; *The Burning Times*; *The People vs Larry Flint*; *Once Were Warriors*; *If These Walls Could Talk*; *The Famine Within*; and *Fire*.

We responded to requests for talks at various locations, some regarding specific topics such as "reproductive health" and all included a description of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective and what we do. Another exciting development was the release of our new Menopause Kit. The kit is priced at \$10 and donations are encouraged. This way all women can afford the Menopause Kit and those who can afford to pay more can contribute to the collective.

Planning for the coming year is underway; we are soliciting feedback from volunteers regarding 1999/2000 training sessions. As well, the Education Committee has begun to send out public service announcements to local media to raise the profile of training sessions and movie nights.

PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

With the Publicity Committee now one year old, our activities have fallen under two main objectives: to raise awareness of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective within Vancouver and the Lower Mainland; and to undertake fundraising initiatives.

The Publicity Committee carried out a direct-mail fundraising campaign in December 1998 and are planning another direct-mail fundraiser for this fall. As well, we also recruited women artists to show their work at the Information Centre. Each artist's work was launched with an "opening night" and was shown for 6 weeks. The space is now booked until October 1999. Women have found the art shows to be an empowering way to bring new women to the collective.

In celebration of International Women's Day and to launch our new logo, the collective advertised its services in a number of community papers in early March.

In 1999/2000, we plan to design a Vancouver Women's Health Collective postcard to be distributed with New Ad Media. As well, we will be launching our new logo at an evening benefit to raise awareness about the Vancouver Women's Health Collective in the community.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Infusion, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective newsletter, is a forum to connect us with our members and the community at-large around women's health issues. *Infusion* is published three times a year. Last year's issues included articles about "Pleasure", "Food, Glorious Food!" and the Spring 1999 cover story was entitled "A Fertile Spring". Submissions about women's health and well-being are welcome, as well the committee is always looking for new volunteers.

SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

The Volunteer & Staff Solidarity Committee was birthed early in 1999 and its terms of reference were developed to guide the committee's work. Among other things the committee's mandate is to deal with day-to-day volunteer and staffing issues, develop collective process policy, and promote good working conditions and a healthy collective environment.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVOCATE PROJECT

The Community Health Advocate (CHA) Project was initiated in 1998, after finally securing funding. The overall goal of the CHA parallels the mandate of the Vancouver Women's Health Collective -- to help women help themselves to take control of her own health care.

The essence of the Community Health Advocate Project is that violence and disrespect in the health care system will be reduced when women find their voice and feel confident to demand proper treatment. The advocates are all volunteers, donating their time to help empower women in their communities to speak out for their health care needs -- for safe, respectful, and appropriate health care.

A CHA manual and training program were developed. Community networks were formed, actually re-established in most cases, with various communities in the Vancouver/Richmond region. The twelve advocates which were recruited participated in three days of training in late-November, and then worked hard to establish themselves in their communities.

The following organizations endorsed the project by providing a safe space and/or support for the advocates to do their work : South Vancouver Neighbourhood House; UBC Women's Centre; Multi-Cultural Family Centre; Downtown Eastside Senior Centre; South Asian Women's Centre; Richmond Women's Resource Centre; and Women with Disabilities Health Action Group.

Community Health Advocates continue to work to expand their own networks, and promote their services. The advocates have committed to the work for at least one year, and hopefully beyond if further funding is secured.

VANCOUVER WOMEN'S HEALTH COLLECTIVE SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

year ended 31 March 1999

unaudited

REVENUE	1999
Grants	\$90,877
Gaming	38,924
Donations	5,545
Fundraising	1,570
Membership fees	1,448
Office services	20,906
Other	1,571
Publications	833
	<hr/> 161,674

Expenditures	
Amortization	4,710
Bookkeeping	3,680
Conference & members fees	537
Equipment rent & service	7,946
Fundraising	-
GST expense	1,950
Honoraria	4,725
Insurance	805
Literature for resale	4,239
Materials & supplies	2,137
Miscellaneous	2,561
Office expenses	6,292
Printing & production	3,412
Professional fees	700
Rent & parking	42,276
Resource materials	745
Salaries & contract services	68,149
Telephone & fax	3,723
	<hr/> 158,587

Surplus	3,087
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The VWHC's Information Centre offers all women:

Health Education Sessions

A Women's Resource Library

Health Information Files

Movie Nights

Health/Holistic Practitioner and Therapist Files


Videos on Women's Health

VWHC Publications for Sale @ \$5 each

~ Avoiding Pregnancy

~ Miscarriage

~ Talking about Periods

 ~ Women Talking about Health

 ~ A Feminist Approach to Pap Tests

Alternative Health Products for Sale

~ 'The Keeper' Menstrual Cup

~ Reusable Cloth Menstrual Pads

Staffed exclusively by volunteers,
the Information Centre is open:

Monday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Tuesday 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Wednesday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm & 6:30 - 8:30 pm

Thursday 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Saturday 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Call for health information & additional hours

736-5262

219 - 1675 W. 8th Avenue, Vancouver