

*Vancouver
Women's
Health
Collective*



*Annual Report
2003/2004*

Vancouver Women's Health Collective

1 - 175 East 15th Avenue
Vancouver BC Canada V5T 2P6
Health Information Line 604-736-5262
www.womenshealthcollective.ca
E-mail: vwhc@vcn.bc.ca
Administration 604-736-4234

Our Universal Purpose

Health for all women in an equitable society.

Our Mission Statement

We are women who value women's knowledge, support one another to take charge of our own health, and raise awareness and inspire action for the feminist advancement of women's health.

Our Values

Women's knowledge

- We value shared information and experience over authoritative knowledge, especially when it comes to our own bodies. We support a woman's right to make informed choices about her health and health care. We support women's sexual autonomy. We are pro-choice.

Our health model

- We promote a holistic model and preventative health care. We fight for publicly funded, universal health care. We challenge the health care system to meet the needs of women.

Our anti-violence agenda

- We expose and work to change the ways that the health care system perpetuates violence against women. We offer information and other resources to women who are experiencing violence in their lives.

Our alliances

- We embrace a local and global perspective on women's health and health care. We forge alliances with women, women's organizations, and health groups to build an equitable society.

Our political culture

- We offer women a woman-only space and women-centred services and a gendered perspective on health and health care. We are feminists who work collectively, value consensus decision-making and support women activists strategizing for change.

Source: VWHC Policy Manual, September 2003

Our Members

We are a charitable, non-profit women's organization, funded primarily by donations, membership fees, grants, and fundraising initiatives. Volunteer members are an essential part of the VWHC — without them we could not offer our services to the women of British Columbia.

Thanks to our 2003/2004 Funders

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services – Funding cut March 31, 2004

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Gaming Policy

Summer Career Placement Program, HRDC

Partners in Organizational Development - United Way of the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Foundation, City of Vancouver

VWHC Members and Donor

VWHC Members and Donors

April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004

Deborah Acor • Irene Barr • Mary Ann Belancic
Elizabeth Bennett • J. Bodewein
Gwyneth Bowen • Anita Braha
BC Teachers' Federation
BC Voice of Women • Mary Jo Brown
Judith Burke • Diane Burton • C.U.P.E. – B.C.
Megan Chang • Jan Christilaw • Gail Clement
Mary Ann Code • Barbara Cohen
C.E.P. – Local 444 • Melanie Conn
Sharon Costello
Cranbrook Women's Resource Society
Judy Devries • Janis Drozdiak • Iona Elgabry
Sacha Fink • Susan Fisher • Rebecca Frame
Angela Hamill • Lucette Hansen
Leila Harding • Anne Harvey • Jody Hawley
Terrie Hendrickson
L' Hirondelle Financial Services • Lesia Hnatiw
Darby Honeyman • Beth Hutchinson
Louise Hutchinson
I.L.W.U. Women's Committee
Ishtar Transition Housing Society
Farahnazz Jamal • Meredith Kimball
Carol Latter • Margaret Leitner • Mary Liddel
Barbara Little • L. Whitney McMillan
Sara Menzel • Jerry Negraeff • Cynthia O'Brien
Niveria Oliveira • Rhodea Omler
Pacific Post Partum Support Society
Trisha Phillips • Maureen Picone
Marion Pollack • Jerilynn Prior
Pro-Choice Action Network
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Leanne Ringma • Joan Robillard
Sunita Romeder • Alia Rosenstock
Adrienne Ross • Shirley Ross • Winona Rowat
Jane Rule • Nikki Scott • Belinda Shelton
SFU Women's Centre • Barbara Soles
South Fraser Women's Society • Leah Squance
Bronwyn Sullivan • Frances Suski
Natalie Taylor • Diane Thorne • Diane Trovato
Susan Wendell • Eileen Wheeler
Women in Print • Women's Contact Society
Joanne Young
Yukon Status of Women's Council
Melanie Zieba

2003/2004

Steering Committee Members

Terrie Hendrickson, President

Lesia Hnatiw, Vice-president

Sharon Costello, Treasurer

Sacha Fink, Secretary

Belinda Shelton, Member-at-large

Iona Elgabry, Member-at-large

Employees

Brenda Belak, Information Centre Director
(beginning in October 2003)

Caryn Duncan, Executive Director

Summer Student

Sacha Fink

Year In Review

April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004

This year was particularly difficult for the women of BC and for the Vancouver Women's Health Collective. Confronting the reality that we would lose 40 percent of our revenue by year-end, the VWHC continued to provide health information for women through our health information telephone line, VWHC web site, health resource library, and our newsletter, HER VOICE. We also developed a strategic plan for the VWHC to re-focus our work, expand our community outreach, revise our policy manual, constitution and by-laws, and re-evaluate our fundraising efforts in light of provincial government cut-backs to women's services. One strategic outcome was a special general meeting in March 2004 to adopt a new constitution and by-laws for the VWHC.

Effective March 31, 2004, the provincial government would cut its funding to the VWHC and 36 other women's centres in BC. Over the years, this \$47,000 provincial grant has enabled the VWHC to pay their two employees who both work part-time. Due to the uncertainty created by the anticipated loss of this funding, the VWHC steering committee took the difficult decision to leave vacant the Information Centre Director position from April to September 2003. This cost-saving measure resulted in a depletion of our volunteer base and constrained our programming for 6 months. It also meant that we could defer \$3,473 to the 2004/05 fiscal year. This would enable us, in the short-term, to run the organization on our three-decade accumulated modest surplus, if we did not secure funding to offset the loss of our provincial grant.

With March 31, 2004, looming and some very hard decisions facing the steering committee and staff, we forged ahead under stressful and difficult circumstances. Throughout the year a lot of energy was expended investigating alternative sources of

funding. In an eleventh hour decision, the City of Vancouver granted the VWHC \$49,000 under its Community Services Grant program.

Many thanks to City of Vancouver councillors for recognizing the important services we provide and advocacy work we do on behalf of women. As well, many thanks to our members, donors, and other supporters. You all played a crucial role in getting us through this terrible year.

Advocating for Women's Health

The VWHC advocated for appropriate, quality health care for women through the media and as an active member of:

- the Raging Women Against the Cuts
- the BC CEDAW group, established to engage with the United Nations' committee that oversees the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- the International Women's Day organizing committee
- the Vancouver and District Labour Council (VDLC) women's committee, and
- FAFIA (Feminist Alliance for International Action).

Highlights of the year included the October 2003 Raging Women's Forum at which Council of Canadian's Chair, Maude Barlow, and the VWHC's Caryn Duncan spoke about the impact of globalization and government cutbacks on women's lives in BC and around the globe. The VWHC also participated at the FAFIA meetings in Ottawa in June and November 2003, and at the BC CEDAW group press conference in February 2004. Through FAFIA and the BC CEDAW group, we were able to hold the federal and BC governments accountable for their inaction on eliminating discrimination against women in BC and countrywide.

As a member of the BC Health Coalition, the VWHC participated in a number of health care-related events throughout the year. The VWHC is serving a second one-year term as co-chair of the BCHC. These responsibilities are shared with the BC Nurses' Union. The BCHC raised vigorous opposition to the numerous cuts to health care services and programs across the province. Caryn Duncan and BCHC co-ordinator, Terrie Hendrickson, presented to the Standing Committee on Finance in October 2003, urging the federal government to reassert its role in health care. As well, the BCHC and its Women's Working Group continue to highlight the effects of cutbacks on women and to object to the loss of health care jobs, 90% of which are held by women. On May 28, 2003, the Women's Working Group also marked the International Day of Action for Women's Health. The VWHC and BCHC women's fact sheet – Impacting Women: Provincial Cuts to Health Care – will be updated for our May 28th celebrations in 2004.

Health Information Centre

It was a busy and challenging year at the Information Centre. Throughout 2003/04, the VWHC responded to at least 1,500 women's queries by telephone, e-mail, and in person at the Information Centre. As well, women's organizations, community groups, health practitioners, and individual women held meetings, training sessions, and support groups among other events at the Information Centre. With no Information Centre Director for six months, our summer student, Sacha Fink, played a crucial role in assisting women who contacted the Information Centre. In October, Brenda Belak, the new Information Centre Director, launched into a busy schedule to re-establish our volunteer base and re-connect with women at women's organizations and immigrant-serving organizations in the community.

We continue to strive to make our Information Centre a vital and exciting place to visit and with which to be involved. Our strategic planning established a number of objectives to re-focus the work of the Information Centre. In 2003/2004 the Information Centre continued to be open 20 hours per week, which translates into more than one thousand volunteer hours. Our staff and many volunteers advocate for women and strive to meet the increased demand for our services as other community organizations are forced to close.

Some of the 2003/2004 highlights at the Information Centre include:

- Revising our volunteer in-take procedures and training 14 new volunteers.
- Expanding the VWHC health files to include Aboriginal health, detoxification cleanses under complementary therapies, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy, stress, plastic surgery, and weight loss diets and nutrition.
- Reworking our practitioner and therapist directory to include languages spoken.
- Two new acquisitions at our library:
Endometriosis: The Complete Reference for Taking Charge of Your Health by Mary Lou Ballweg, and *Common Occurrence: The Impact of Homelessness on Women's Health*.
- Our May 28th forum "Exercise Your Reproductive Rights" to celebrate the International Day of Action for Women's Health.
- Community actions on Vancouver street corners, organized by the VWHC's pro-choice action group, the Clothesline Project. The actions engaged women including many passersby by getting them to paint their reasons for being pro-choice on sheets and hanging these cloth messages on a clothesline.
- Updating our web site to include upcoming events at the Information Centre.

- Hosting information tables at many community events such as the Raging Women's Forum, International Women's Day, and the Aboriginal Youth Sexual Health Fair.
- Providing workshops to women at immigrant-serving organizations such as Pacific Immigrant Services Society.
- Giving presentations about the VWHC at community colleges such as Douglas College.
- Hosting a practicum student from UBC's Women's Studies program.

Through the initiative, commitment and hard work of volunteers and staff, the VWHC Information Centre will continue to promote informed, women-centred, self-determined health care for the women of British Columbia.

HER VOICE Newsletter

HER VOICE, the Vancouver Women's Health Collective newsletter, provides a forum to connect the collective with its members and donors, and the community-at-large around women's health issues and activities taking place at the VWHC. The Fall 2003 issue of *HER VOICE* – "Women are fighting back!" – was devoted to women's efforts to confront the cuts to women's services in BC. The Spring 2004 issue of *HER VOICE* also featured articles about government cutbacks including welfare cuts. As well, we profiled a range of women's health issues and services available in the community and at the VWHC.

Statement of Revenue and Expenses

for the year ended March 31, 2004, Unaudited
(with comparative figures for 2003)

REVENUE	2004	2003
Grants	58,283	66,795
Gaming	42,333	43,125
Donations	3,687	4,063
Information Services	130	109
Membership fees	1,050	960
Office Services	2,316	2,161
Other	2,010	1,334
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	109,809	118,547
	<hr/>	<hr/>
EXPENSES		
Accounting & bookkeeping	3,013	2,130
Advertising & promotion	170	1,096
Amortization	1,317	2,405
Conference fees & training	405	616
Equipment rent & service	3,135	2,118
GST expense	1,517	1,075
Insurance	648	677
Materials & office supplies	3,602	3,485
Miscellaneous	753	860
Postage expenses	1,731	1,805
Printing & production	2,007	1,680
Rent & utilities	22,244	20,919
Resource materials	414	703
Salaries & benefits	62,793	75,999
Strategic planning	3,267	0
Telephone & fax	2,508	2,466
Travel	163	102
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	109,687	118,136
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Surplus/Deficit for the year	122	411
Gain (loss) on disposition of assets	-	(2,500)
Surplus, beginning of year	28,752	30,841
Retained earnings, end of year	28,874	28,752

Note: the VWHC's 2003 review was conducted by Certified General Accountants, Loren & Company, and the 2004 review was completed by Irene Sternitzke, C.G.A.

Vancouver Women's Health Collective Information Centre

Offers all Women:

- health information telephone line — information on health issues and resources available in your community
- information on our website
- women's health resource library
- health information files
- practitioner & therapist directory — from surgeons to naturopaths — includes evaluations completed by women who wish to share their experiences with other women, and questionnaires completed by practitioners & therapists about their services
- videos on women's health
- VWHC Menopause Kit in English and Chinese, for sale
- reusable cloth menstrual pads, for sale

Staffed predominantly by volunteers
please call the
Information Centre
for our hours of operation:
604-736-5262

1 - 175 East 15th Avenue,
Vancouver, BC V5T 2P6
www.womenshealthcollective.ca