



WOMEN'S CENTRE

D.E.W. DROP IN

The Newsletter for the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre

**Downtown Eastside Women-Drop In Free
May 2007**



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Upcoming events:

Wednesday May 2, 2007, 1:00 - 2:00

Strathcona Mental Health Team at DEWC

Karen and Christine will be at the centre to answer questions regarding accessing mental health resources.

Sunday May 13 , 2007-12:00

DEWC Mother's Day Picnic at Trout Lake

Transportation provided meet here at the Centre

Tuesday May 13, 2007, 11:00 -4:00

Papaloza

The Nurses will be here at DEWC for this event

Sunday May 20, 2007 5:00-700

DEWC Community Kitchen

Join Linda and work with some delicious recipes

Women's Thoughts...

Seven months ago, my boyfriend and I were forced to move out of our place leaving everything we owned behind. I struggled with my addiction and so did he. It was the start of a long journey of inner struggles, guilt, anger, not knowing where this road was going to take us. There were many days of arguments, days of long talks trying to understand why this was happening and how we were going to get to the end of this journey. But soon the "why this was happening" didn't matter anymore, it was obvious that drugs brought us here and now we had to find it within ourselves, the strength to change.

We started looking for an apartment but every month the money was gone and our hopes and dreams of changing started to dwindle. There were so many drugs I remember of wanting to give up, but our love for each other and the dreams that we had, kept us going through all the fights, all those nights in different shelters. Bitter cold nights, frost bitten feet, sleeping in stairwells of hotels, drenched from rainy nights. Both of us endured the worst flu which lasted for a month. All for drugs.

But perseverance and reaching out has given us the light at the end of that tunnel because we really wanted it. We are now moving into a beautiful 1 bedroom apartment, all utilities included, washer, dryer and it has 2 balconies!! And now our test begins. We have fought so hard to get here and now the struggle to keep it will begin. For us it has been a long road. But our hopes and dreams are starting to materialize and we will fight tooth and nail to keep it.

Thank you to all the women at the DEWC and all the ones that crossed my path in this eastside area that helped me in ways I cannot explain. I would not change any of my experiences for the world because this part of my journey was meant for me to see and to take the lesson out of it to benefit me in the next stage of my life. There is so much more to this story, so many details, but I really hope that what I have said will help even one person conquer their struggles. I am honoured to be a part of this community.

Thank you,
Melissa



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

**Come and join us at
Trout Lake Park
for a picnic to celebrate
Mother's Day!**

SUNDAY May 13th, 2007

**Transportation provided, meet at the
Centre at 12:00.**

**Also, the annual POW WOW happens
at the same time in the Trout Lake
Community Centre**



Volunteer Dinner at the Urban Buffet On April 22nd, 2007

Well 23 of us, including our favourite lady Sara, (who looks after us all so well) marched off to the Urban Buffet, on the edge of Yale town to try and eat enough food for a very large army of hungry women. Well, we all certainly showed the restaurant and all its patrons how it is done!

We were treated to an array of deliciously prepared foods from all over the world. There was everything from fresh Sushi to Southern Fried Chicken. Some of the women's favourites were deep fried squid, sweet and sour chicken wings, southern fried chicken and almond chicken. One of the highlights of the dessert table was the vanilla soft serve ice cream dispenser. Audrey and Chili Bean had the machine figured out in no time! What would we do without those ladies eh???

Well, we grazed for over 90 minutes and slowly all got up to waddle out into the streets. The getting home was not only exercise, but challenging as well as some of us walked and some did the old walk and bus ride. We all made it home and no one ended up in the ER, so it was all-good ladies.

Thank you so much Sara, for the wonderful food fun! See you all at the next food frenzy ladies.

Lovingly reviewed by: Linda E.

News from the Management Team

Last month the DEWC Emergency Shelter moved to 412 E. Cordova Street. This has been a positive move for women who use the shelter as well as for the day to day operations of the drop in. As you may know we have not had a chance to conduct our regular performance survey regarding the quality of service and programs we operate here at the Centre. We did however host a community meeting for Centre members to discuss how they felt the Centre was operating.

Over 35 women attended the meeting, hosted by the Elders that was held on Friday April 20. Here are the notes, thank you to Agatha our practicum student for typing them out.

In order of significance;

10 women commented on the excellent food services – this is a vast improvement from 3 years ago when the biggest complaint was the poor food service

8 women felt that the role the Centre plays as a safe place was significant, especially the Emergency Shelter

6 women brought up the importance of having programs that address personal hygiene matters, such as the clothing room and showers.

Also important were the groups such as WEAVE, POWER Group, Taiko, Grief and Loss.

Here is what else women said are good qualities of the Centre:

Have community meetings	Exercise
Newsletter	Helpful staff
Teaches you something new	Advocacy- helps the women get the help they need
Socialize	Discipline
Peer helping peer	Organization
Long distance calling	Responsive to community
Telephone usage	Victim services

Mostly we talked about what needs to improve at the Centre. Women offered constructive criticisms that included solutions and how members could be more involved in Centre. The most significant issue is the disrespect and aggression Centre members have towards each other and the discrimination between groups of the Centre. This includes drug use in the Centre, swearing, arguing and threats at the Centre. The next BIG thing is the state of the washrooms, everyone agreed that the washrooms were DIRTY and the line ups were unacceptable! Of course bear in mind we have 250 members at the Centre a day and only 2 washrooms, including the shower room. Even if only half of us use the washroom once a day that is 125 or 62.5 flushes a day, minimum! It is no wonder the washrooms are hygiene challenged, the last time I used a public washroom in a mall – it was terrible, and they have full time janitorial staff!

THE PROBLEM: Filthy washrooms and long line ups

- Contributing factors;
- Women using the washrooms for doing their make up
- Using drugs
- Washroom as only private space – anywhere
- Health conditions affects ability to use washroom!
- NOT ENOUGH WASHROOMS!

SOLUTION:

- Install a blue light so women can't use drugs
- Remove the mirrors and install them in the Centre so women will put on make up outside the washrooms
- Covert to stalls rather than solid doors
- HAVE A BATHROOM MONITOR

These are excellent suggestions and we will try to implement some of the solutions such as: install blue lights and relocating the mirrors, of course we will consult with the members first. The monitor is a great idea and this should probably be discussed further. At the meeting there were lots of concerns regarding the need for women to clean up after themselves, this is our Centre and we need to keep it clean. There was concerns that staff were not doing their jobs by cleaning the washrooms. It is not staff's responsibility to clean up after Centre members – floor staff are peer support workers to help with issues like housing, violence, addictions, crisis, family, mental health, etc. **THEY ARE NOT CLEANERS.**

Of course there were many many other issues but the common thread was the lack of involvement of Centre members in the day to day operations. This is a community space and it really is up to individual members to create a 'home away from home' that they can be proud of and happy to be in. This includes peace and quiet, clean and hygienic, friendly and welcoming. Most of the time the Centre is an amazing and beautiful place, over the next few months we will work with the staff, members and volunteers to make it better.

Other comments from the meeting on the things that we should be working on:

<p>STAFF More support for the Victim service worker women wait too long - to see her HIV outreach more—is requested Staff stop fighting / arguing in the centre in front on the women No abusing the staff or the volunteers Need more respect in centre women and staff Power project should be more consistent and the mandate should be implemented</p> <p>ABUSE Time outs Reassurance or the rules of the centre to the women No more swearing, put downs Need more respect in centre women and staff No conflicts towards anyone in general</p> <p>CLEANING Washrooms-Have them checked at least every half hour Cleaner bathrooms Check regularly for needles & pipes No back packs taken into washrooms Blue light in washroom Look after the washrooms Bathrooms-more stalls, take out mirrors more bathroom monitors The evening groups need to clean up more after their evening group Cooperation from all women in the everyday functions</p>	<p>PROGRAMMING Daycare services for the women who are members who need the daycare Cable – for watching the current news Hot meals once or even three times a day Laundry services should be active again Anger management Exercise Daily activities – line dancing, plain dancing Teaching boundaries Quite time Calmer music Maybe lunch coupons More Healing circles Life skills workshop</p> <p>VOLUNTEERS Talk one on one with the volunteer who argue, instead one of them getting barred More acknowledgements for the volunteers Not enough volunteers to do different jobs- bathrooms, tables and chairs</p> <p>FUNDING Start fundraising – find the right people who want to take part Then sell T- shirts with the women’s centre logo on it Make alliances with non-profit organizations Look for Cooperate for funding</p> <p>MISC. First aid kit & Emergency auto repair kit for the van – needs to updated</p>
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This list/report will be taken to the staff, volunteers and Centre Board of Directors. Changes are not going to happen overnight but we will address these concerns, hopefully by the next community meeting. Thank you to everyone to participated, your vision and hopes for the Centre can only make us better. Remember that there is a suggestion box near the elevators for positive and helpful comments. We expect you to be a part of the solution.

From Our Suggestion Box

The pretty red box located near the elevator

We would like to suggest a bathroom monitor to check the bathrooms regularly and clean it. The girls don't take care of the bathrooms. This way it is clean for everyone.
Chrissy

Response:

This issue was brought up and was in fact the biggest concern at the community meeting. We will look at various solutions including installing a 'black' light, moving the mirrors and cutting down the doors to make stalls.

Having bathroom monitors is one solution which we will need to continue to discuss. Some concerns include; conflict and crisis management, getting women to clean up after themselves, incentives, etc.

It is an excellent solution that we should definitely consider, thanks.

**DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE WOMEN'S CENTRE
PROGRAMMING**

302 Columbia Street, Vancouver

604.681.8480 ALL SPECIAL/NEW EVENTS ARE IN BOLD

LUNCH SERVED

DAILY AT 12:30-1:45

REGULAR

SUNDAY 12:00-5:00*	MONDAY 10:00-5:00*	TUESDAY 10:00-5:00*	WEDNESDAY 11:00-5:00*	THURSDAY 10:00-5:00*	FRIDAY 10:00-5:00*	SATURDAY 12:00-5:00*
		1 10:00 M/S 3:15 Grief & Loss 5:00 BWSS	2 2:00 Crochet 2:00 Karaoke 5:00 POW2W	3 10:00-12:00 Painting 5:00 Healing Circle	4 5:00 Taiko	5 2:00 Video
6 10:00 CHODDAR 2:00 Bingo 3:00 Resumes 5:00 Art Workshop	7 10:00-12:00 Drawing & Painting 5:00 Community Kitchen	8 10:00 M/S 10:00 Welfare App. 3:15 Grief & Loss 5:00 BWSS	9 2:00 Crochet 2:00 Karaoke 5:00 POW2W	10 10:00-12:00 Painting 5:00 Healing Circle	11 2:00 Beading 5:00 Taiko	12 2:00 Video
13 10:00 CHODDAR 12:00 MOTHER'S DAYPICNIC 2:00 Bingo 3:00 Resumes	14 10:00-12:00 Drawing & Painting	15 10:00 M/S 10:00 Welfare App. 11:00 Papaloza 3:15 Grief & Loss 5:00 BWSS	16 2:00 Crochet 2:00 Karaoke 5:00 POW2W	17 10:00-12:00 Painting 5:00 Healing Circle	18 2:00 Beading 5:00 Taiko	19 2:00 Video 2:00-5:00 Art Workshop
20 10:00 CHODDAR 2:00 Bingo 3:00 Resumes 5:00 Community Kitchen	21 VICTORIA DAY Centre opens at 12:00	22 10:00 M/S 10:00 Welfare App. 12:00 Street Nurse 3:15 Grief & Loss 5:00 BWSS	23 CLOSED	24 10:00-12:00 Painting	25 2:00 Beading 5:00 Taiko	26 2:00 Video 2:00-5:00 Art Workshop
27 10:00 CHODDAR 2:00 Bingo 3:00 Resumes 5:00 POW2W	28 10:00 Drawing Painting &	29 10:00 M/S 10:00 Welfare App. 3:15 Grief & Loss 5:00 BWSS	30 2:00 Crochet 2:00 Karaoke 5:00 POW2W	31 10:00 Painting 5:00 Healing Circle		

* PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CENTRE IS OPEN UNTIL 5:00 PM BUT DOORS WILL BE LOCKED AT 4:45 PM

Massage: Every Tuesday from 10-12

*Street Nurses: Christina or Liz
Sweat Lodge: Every 2nd Wednesday, Elder Reta will take women to the Lodge, meet at the Centre at 11:30*

Resume Workshop: Create your own resume with the help of a practicum student

ARTS & CRAFTS WORKSHOPS

*Painting: Monday's and Thursday's with Rose
Crochet with Anna & Freeda: Every Wednesday at 2:00*

Sewing Circle with Freeda: Every Tuesday at 10:00

Beading with Leona: Every Friday at 2:00pm

Karaoke: Sing a tune with Reta and Jem, every second Wednesday from 2:00-4:30

EVENING PROGRAMMING

Tuesdays: Grief and Loss Group - Support for women going through changes and loss of all kinds, relationships, community, family, children, etc.

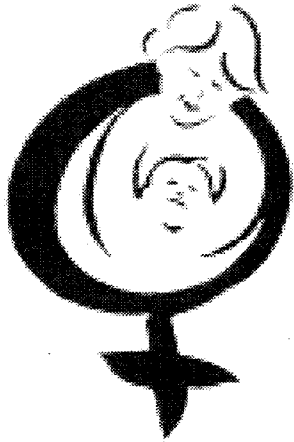
Tuesdays: Battered Women Support Services

*Support for women experiencing violence
Community Kitchen- Once a month, come out to make a meal together and pack some for home. All ingredients provided*

Wednesdays: POW2W - Social justice group and other activities from 5-8

*Fridays Taiko
Thursdays: Healing Circle - Except the day after Welfare*

Fridays: Taiko Drumming - For anyone who would like to learn taiko and perform



Enterprising Women Make Art

101 East Cordova
Corner of Cordova and
Columbia

604-331-1407 ext.104
Sheila or Mary

Provided by Atira Womne's Resource Society

LEARN TO MAKE ARTS AND CRAFTS

You are invited to join us!

On Thursday afternoons from 1-3:30

Each workshop a specific project is taught

Supplies provided for free

You keep what you make

Drop-In style – Just show up

(Limited to 15 participants)

WOMEN ONLY



WOMEN'S CENTRE

DEWC 412 WOMEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER

The Emergency Shelter opened on April 23, 2007 at 412 East Cordova just across the street from Oppenheimer Park. That night over 40 women needed to use the services due to homelessness and violence. Although this new space has added features such as more room, quiet sleeping rooms, separate tv room, separate dining hall, more washrooms, showers and laundry, the fact that emergency shelters have become a reality SUCKS.

The shelter staff and the drop in staff have worked incredibly hard over the past 5 months to ensure that the shelter continues to open. We have all washed and fixed the toilets, clean up bodily messes as well as dishes, mopped floor, cleaned the sidewalk – all this even before their work day started. Just so that Centre members and Shelter users would have a clean place to be. THANK YOU!

People should have homes where they feel safe, cared for and wanted. Most of the women who use the shelter have been homeless for over 2 years, many have experienced a history of violence and abuse. Some have serious addiction issues, some have mental health issues.

Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat.

Mother Theresa

As you know housing has been a major issue for over a decade. With the Olympics looming – the City and the Province are going to try to implement short term, feel good, beautification projects. Over the next few months we will facilitate discussions among women to develop a vision for our neighbourhood – this has to include a process for action to achieve this vision and a commitment from each one of us to make it possible.

DEWC TAIKO GROUP

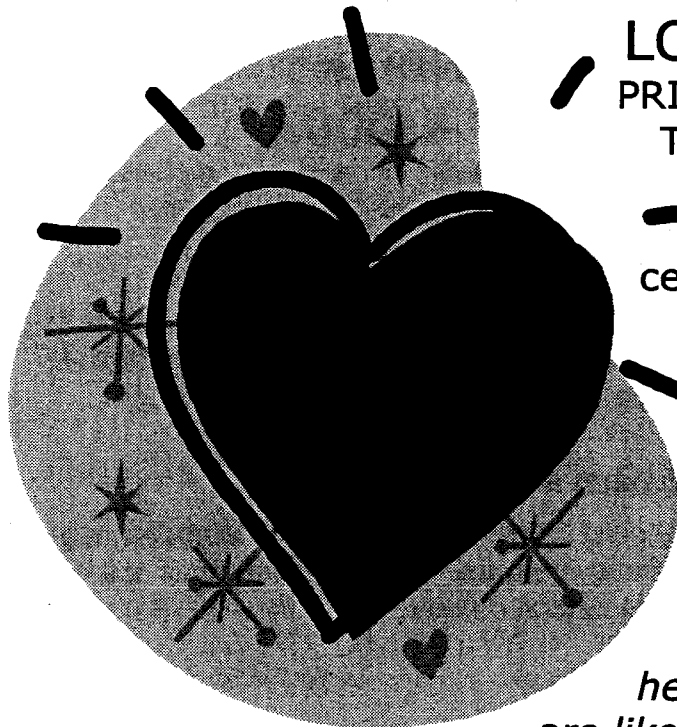


Pat, Sue, Karen, Anne Marie and Cynthia at the 2006 Alexander St. Block Party

We have been meeting as a group for over 2 years to play together, the purpose is to learn, exercise and flex our creative muscles. We also have performances in the community, our next performance is on Friday June 1 for the BC Yukon Society of Transition Houses. Although performances are important and they motivate us the focus is on working together – leading, supporting and ‘following’. To play together we have to be mindful of each other, although we are individuals together we come together and make a big noise!

Over time some of us have noticed changes in our body, we feel stronger and more flexible. Performing in public has increased our self confidence and self esteem. Even our kiais are stronger – kiai is the single explosive focus of will! Of course you will hear a belly yell that would shake your boots.

As women we are often socialized to be quiet and demure as we unlearn this with our bodies and spirits we enjoy each others company.



LOVIN' THE CENTRE
PRIZE WINNER FOR APRIL IS ...
Theresa Ng

— She has won a \$25 gift certificate to Future Shop

— This is what someone wrote:

The Centre means family to me since my family treats me mean. I like it here because you all are like my family, at least you don't hurt my feelings or back stab me.

You can be a winner too!
All you have to do is to tell us why you love the Centre.

Write it on a piece of paper with your name put it into the red mail box by the elevator at the Centre.
Don't forget to include your contact information!

This month you can win a \$25 gift certificate to Save On Foods.

PAPALOZA at DEWC

With our Street Nurses

May 15th 11:00 – 4:00

1. What is a Pap test (cervical cytology)?

The Pap test (cervical cytology) is a technique used to detect changes in the cells of the cervix. The cervix is the entrance to the uterus, at the top of your vagina.

2. Why is it important for me to have a regular Pap test?

The Pap test detects cervical changes that might develop into cancer over many years. These changes have no specific symptoms. Having regular tests is the way to make sure that cervical changes are detected early.

3. Who should have a Pap test?

All women who have ever been sexually active including lesbians and queer women should have the test, even if you are not sexually active right now.

You should be particularly sure to have routine Pap tests if:

- you have already been treated for cervical abnormalities or cancer;
- you have undergone a partial hysterectomy (removal of the uterus without removing the cervix)

The Rules

1. The female always makes the rules.
2. No male can possibly know the rules.
3. If the female suspects the male knows all the rules she must immediately change some of the rules
4. THE FEMALE IS NEVER WRONG
5. The female can change her mind at any point in time
6. The female has the right to be angry or upset at any time.
7. The male must remain calm at ALL times, unless the FEMALE wants him to be angry or upset.
8. The female must under no circumstances let the male know whether to be angry or upset.
9. If the female has PMS, all rules are NULL and VOID.
10. THE MALE CANNOT DIAGNOSE PMS.
11. The Man should always know what the female wants so she does not have to ask.
12. When unsure see rule #1.

- The DTES has been declared a medical health disaster with the highest reported HIV/HEPC infection rates in the Western world.
- 65% of all child apprehensions are from single parents on welfare. In BC, Aboriginal children are 6.3 times more likely to be removed than non-Aboriginal children.
- Women work 2/3 of the world's working hours, produce ½ f of the world's food, but earn only 10% of the world's income and own less than 1% of the world's property.

We try to understand how these different systems and structures affect our lives. We also discuss ways to strengthen ourselves collectively so we can act and be heard in transforming these structures.

The group includes outings, movies, discussion, theatre, guests, and much more.

This is currently an open group that meets on Wednesday evenings and the Sunday after check-day from 5pm-8pm (Dinner from 5pm-6pm).

All women are welcome and bring your ideas, thoughts, and stories!

For more information, questions, or your ideas for this project, come talk to Harsha (Sundays-Wednesdays) or email project@dewc.ca or call 604-681-8480 x 234.

Create the change you wish to see in the world!
Harsha

POWER OF WOMEN TO WOMEN PROJECT AND EVENING GROUP

The Power of Women to Women Project is a social justice project aimed to empower us to create social change in our lives and communities. Some of the topics we discuss in the evening group as part of the Project are homelessness, violence, poverty, media, colonialism, policing, government structures, the economy, and much more.

For example, did you know:

- One in five Canadian women lives in poverty, totalling 2.8 million women.
- In 1999, women earned \$0.64 to men's \$1.00.
- With the June 2002 changes to social assistance laws, approximately 16,000 women have been removed from the social assistance rolls in BC.
- 1/3 of BC welfare recipients are single-parent families, 88% headed by women.
- 73% of Aboriginal single-mothers lived below the Low Income Cutoff in 1996.
- Approximately 62% of immigrant women live below the poverty line.
- The number of homeless people has doubled to approximately 2,174 people in 2005.
- Shelters, safe houses, and transition houses turn away approximately 200 people a night.
- With gentrification leading to 2010, an estimated 1600 units of housing will be lost.
- On any given day, there are approximately 40 families with children that are homeless.
- 30% of those who are homeless are indigenous people.

WE WANT YOUR STORIES !!!

The Power of Women to Women Project is creating a website as a way for women to have their voices heard beyond the DTES by people all over Vancouver, BC, Canada, and potentially even internationally!

So write a couple of paragraphs, submit a poem, or you can even tell you story orally to Harsha who will write it out. We want to hear from you!!!

You can pick one or more of any of the following topics:

- How you came to the DTES?
- Can you share some thoughts or stories about living in the DTES?
- What you would like to see change in this neighbourhood? What do you think the government should do?
- Are there experiences with your landlord, with the police, with your family, with the welfare office, with MCFD that you would like people to know about?
- Do you have an opinion on the housing situation and lack of affordable housing, on the Olympics, on addictions, on social assistance rates, on escalating levels of violence against women, on health issues?
- If there is something you could tell people in another country about life in the DTES, what would you tell them?

The Power of Women to Women Project and website is a way for women to empower themselves and share their stories, their struggles, and their own personal vision for social change.

There is a box at the front desk to leave your stories in- (you don't have to put your name on it). Also you can talk to Harsha and she will write out your story if you want to tell it verbally.

Harsha: email project@dewc.ca or call 604-681-8480 x 234