

2019-2020 Annual Report



REVELSTOKE
**Women's Shelter
Society**

Leadership message

This fiscal year was a year of significant change for our organization as we, along with everyone else, dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic.

We became an essential service and my team's commitment not only to the transition house but to our community was exceptional as they developed a program called Social Response to Covid-19.

I am very proud of their response and commitment. They went above and beyond to make sure vulnerable people in Revelstoke had access to essential goods and services.

It was also, once again, one of our busiest years since its incorporation. Our organization grew and expanded in our community presence, programming and outreach groups and the amount of women and their children seeking our services.

I would like to give a special thanks to our board of directors for their ongoing support. Without you, there would not be a women's shelter.

To my team, as always you are dedicated and hardworking. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication.

WE MADE IT AGAIN! Stay Safe.



Lynn Loeppky
Executive Director



**1068 BED NIGHTS
COMPARED TO
1734 LAST YEAR**



**42 WOMEN STAYED
COMPARED TO
48 LAST YEAR**



**THE SHELTER WAS
AT CAPACITY FOR
66 NIGHTS**



As a non-profit society, the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society is governed by the B.C. Societies Act through a volunteer board of directors.

Board of Directors

- Lisa Lamothe – Chairperson
- Karen Scott
- Carol Hascarl
- Meg Irving
- Carolyn Jones
- Dustin Fransoo
- Leslie Hogg
- Stacey Brensrud

MISSION

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society exists to offer support, assistance, information and referrals in a courteous and compassionate manner that respects the dignity, privacy, culture and diversity of women and children who are victims of abuse.

MANDATE

The society established Forsythe House as a safe home to provide women and children in our community with temporary shelter. The board of directors and staff of the society work in a non-judgemental manner to support women and their children while exploring their options.



Photo: Board members (from left) Carol Hascarl, Lisa Lamothe, Karen Scott and Meg Irving at the 2018 AGM.

Who We Are

For over 30 years, Forsythe House, established by the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society, has served as a place of refuge and support for women and their children at risk of all forms of abuse.



About the shelter

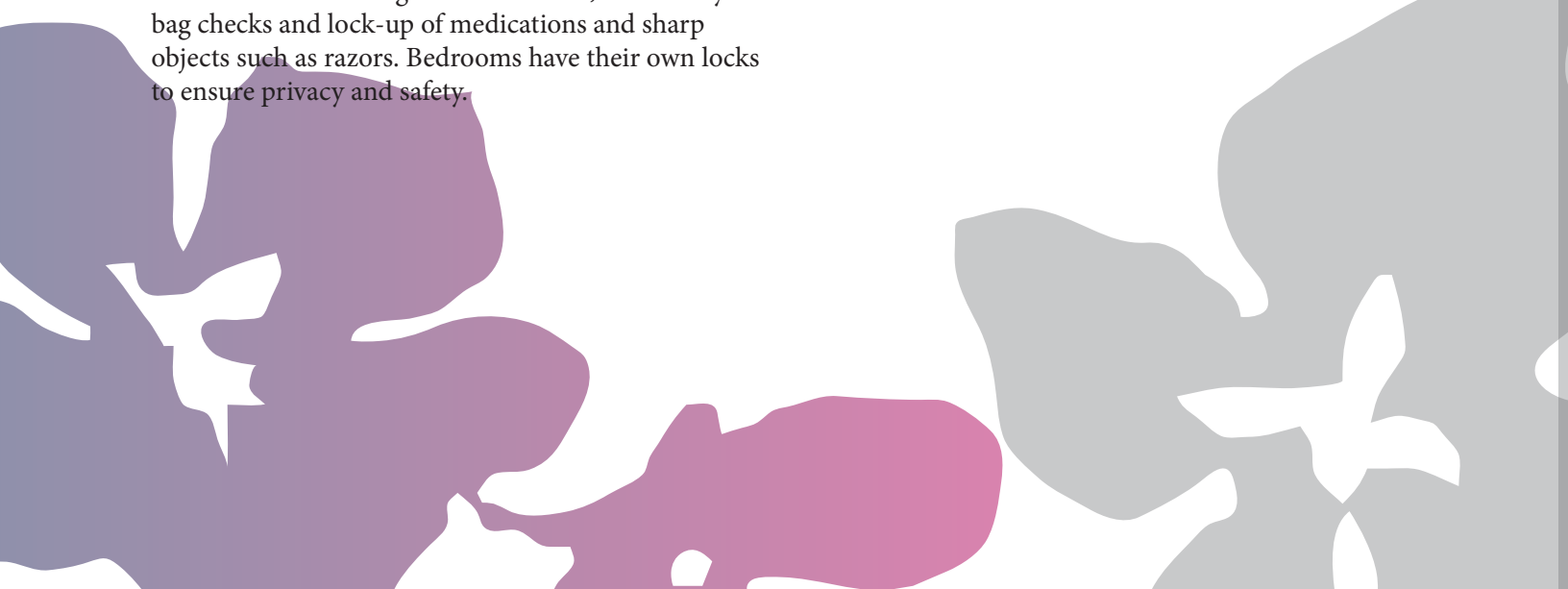
We provide a safe and comfortable place to stay, and essentials such as food, clothing, and toiletries. We also provide confidential counselling, support, advocacy, and preventive education programs. We have a 24-hour helpline and our shelter is a 24-hour staffed home.

The house is alarmed and inside you will find a stocked kitchen, common rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms and laundry facilities. The backyard has a privacy fence and is equipped with a playground and a quiet space.

We ensure everyone's safety with an 11 p.m. curfew, zero tolerance for drug and alcohol use, mandatory bag checks and lock-up of medications and sharp objects such as razors. Bedrooms have their own locks to ensure privacy and safety.

What we offer

- Individual counselling and support
- Child counselling or support
- Parenting/Support information
- Transportation, advocacy, accompaniment
- Referrals
- Ongoing support and mentorship
- Outreach services





News

Uplift Magazine

We created and distributed a magazine to raise awareness. Not everyone accesses our services but it's important for both women and men to understand what healthy relationships are and what abuse looks like because it is so nuanced and prevalent in our society.

The magazine was distributed around Revelstoke from June and several transition houses requested copies, which we sent. It was also featured in local media and recognized by the B.C. Society of Transition Houses.

Shelters deal with Covid-19

Women's issues around domestic violence, vulnerability, and isolation have increased in the past year across Canada. 67 shelters, including our shelter, took part in a workshop on how to run programming through Covid-19. Lynn was invited to present after our Social Response Programming was initiated.

Second Stage Housing

Last year we put in an Expression of Interest to B.C. Housing to build and maintain second stage housing for women, and their children, fleeing abuse. This will allow for better ongoing support and advocacy. It is an important step in giving another safe and affordable option for women other than going back to their abuser for financial reasons.

Revelstoke has been flagged as needing various forms of housing and our EOI was accepted.

Lynn is currently working with Alan Mason from Revelstoke's Housing Society on a multi-agency housing plan for B.C. Housing's property at 420 Downie St, purchased from the Revelstoke Board of Education's earlier this year.

Winter Shelter

With B.C. Housing agreeing to fund the Extreme Weather Shelter it took on the shape of a homeless shelter during 2019. RWSS secured the United Church as a place willing to look at holding the shelter. Many meetings took place with the Committee of the Whole and the City of Revelstoke to establish a plan.

In July 2019 we attempted to hold public consultation. The first step was to inform the businesses and private residents in the required distance. As most consultations about homeless shelters this one wasn't much different.

There was resistance in the community including an element of NIMBY (Not In My Backyard), but there was also a number of supporters. The city decided to take the lead and there is still a number of steps in the process before this becomes a reality. RWSS contributed in securing the location, funding, and support from B.C. Housing.

Since the city has become the lead RWSS has stepped back from being the host agency, focusing our resources on our own programs and services.

Local groups

The Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society has been an active participant on the city's Social Development Committee and the Collective Impact groups to identify issues individuals face in Revelstoke such as poverty.

The House

Staff members: Helen and Heather

Our house runs 24/7, 365 days a year, although not every day is a crisis. We have a great group of women that keep the house running smoothly. Staff are a crucial part of running the house.

I'm not sure anyone realizes how much would go undone if we stopped doing the day-to-day tasks. We are a parent, a sister, a friend, a shoulder to cry on and not just for the women that walk through our door but also for each other in exhausting times. Every person you meet knows something you don't.

Try to learn from them.

Garden report

Staff member: Laura

A woman brushed against the chest-high purple irises in the meditation garden at the shelter and declared we should, “Paint that which we attend to the most.” For her, painting and gardening are both acts of caring and nature is one of her artistic muses. She added, “If I stay somewhere I always try to contribute in some way.” And during her stay at the shelter, that’s exactly what she did.

She spent hours edging, weeding and watering the flower gardens, and gathered finely crafted bouquets that adorned our lobby and kitchen dining room. In the early spring she started seeds in plastic cups and set them by the window and when the time came to plant them we built a special raised garden box on the sunny side of the house. Those starts have outpaced any of the vegetables in our other gardens.

By mid-June it was possible to enjoy a complete salad picked fresh from our gardens: greens, radishes, green onions, and garnishes of mint, basil and strawberries.

In a time of social distancing, we held a ukulele session in the garden. Weather permitting, the garden may be a wonderful and safe place to make music during the summer.

There is something calming and healing about being in the garden, whether it comes from watching a hummingbird visit the feeder, sitting on a little driftwood bench and watching lilies and irises sway in the breeze, or from seeing the results of hard work. The women’s shelter garden offers all of that and more.



Photo: (Clockwise) Ukulele session in the backyard, fresh herbs, veggies and flowers from the transition house’s gardens.



Outreach

This year the transition house leased an SUV to ensure clients had rides to activities and appointments. This also allows staff to transport women and children safely.

We had a total of 238 outreach appointments. In Revelstoke we see women struggling not only with abuse but with language barriers, isolation factors, or living in crowded conditions.

We increased our grant writing and fundraising to fund our programming. We have moved from the a previous space we rented downtown to host activities to the United Church hall.

We also hosted a Vicarious Trauma Workshop for professionals working in the Revelstoke community which had 35 participants.



Photo: Revelstoke professionals attend a Vicarious Trauma Workshop, funded by the Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society.

Moving Forward Coordinator Anneliese Neweduk



Starting off as a pilot project in 2014, the Moving Forward program has expanded to empower, connect, and support women across the Revelstoke community. Anneliese Neweduk has coordinated the program since fall 2019 and, with the help of shelter staff, has watched the program and its participants adapt and progress throughout the year.

Moving Forward provides a monthly schedule of activities for women, and their children, who are in vulnerable situations. This includes women who have faced various types of abuse, isolation, trauma, and more. The program acts as a social and practical platform and gives these women the opportunity to interact, create meaningful connections, learn, and receive peer and one-on-one support in a safe and supported environment.

The program was originally held at Forsythe house, but has since moved to a downtown location in order to be more accessible to the community. In February 2020 we moved to the main foyer of the United Church on Mackenzie Avenue.

We have painted and re-organized the space, with feedback noting how the new neutral paint job has

Weekly activities and special workshops/outings:

- We continue to provide art therapy through weekly watercolour painting classes, which are well received by the participants. Leading up to Christmas, we had participants paint watercolour cards, which we then sold at the Christmas Market for fundraising purposes. We occasionally bring in other art mediums such as chalk pastels.
- Trauma-informed yoga and yoga nidra classes also continue weekly as a one hour class. The incorporation of chair-yoga has allowed for participants who are elderly or less-mobile to join for some weekly stretching and meditation.
- Beading with help from the Aboriginal Friendship Society has also been consistently offered on a bi-weekly basis and allows clients to explore crafts from different indigenous cultures.
- When possible, we also include special workshops and outings in the community. During the holiday season, I accompanied clients to the The Nutcracker, and RPAC continues to kindly offer us free tickets to events. In the winter we held a laughing yoga class and in the spring we held a vision board making workshop.

brightened up the space and made it more welcoming and calming. The space is large and allows for recommended social distancing during activities.

We have used this space to hold our weekly activities and

Continued next page...

Moving Forward and Covid-19

Moving Forward has had to adapt to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which enhanced the ongoing issue of social isolation even more. Here is what we did maintain connectedness and community:

- We moved all of our weekly programs to a digital delivery format via Zoom. Despite transitioning back to in-person classes, we continue to offer yoga through zoom for some clients who feel more comfortable accessing the class from home.
- I organized, put together, and delivered over 20 art kits to local Revelstoke families and Moving Forward participants which included items such as watercolour painting supplies, colouring books, and acrylic paint supplies. This allowed for those who did not have art materials at home to continue participating in our program.
- I sent and continue to send resources, information, and updates on services and safety to the emailing list as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded.
- With help from the Moving Forward community and other shelter staff, we created a digital cookbook that was subsequently distributed back to participants.
- Planter pots full of herbs or strawberries were also distributed to clients eager to test out their green thumbs this growing season.
- Moving Forward also collaborated with Moving Mountains, The Revelstoke Hospice, and the CRN to put together the Social Response Program, which made goods and services more accessible to those most affected by COVID-19. This included a grocery delivery program at Southside market, a volunteer pairing system, and a phone support tree.

workshops as of June 1 2020, and utilized a digital platform throughout the spring due to COVID-19.

I would also like to touch base on the individual support that I offer to Moving Forward and outreach clients of the shelter.

I am available by text, email, phone, and in person. I assist with personal grocery shopping and errand running, as well as things such as translating and editing of emails, tech assistance, and referrals.

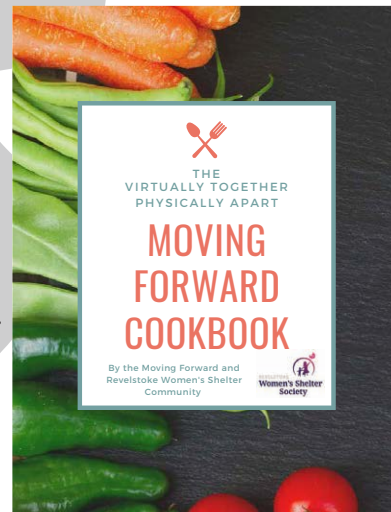
I am also available for some simple company and emotional support.

Clients utilize this service, and numbers of one on one support increased significantly as social distancing measures and stay at home recommendations were introduced.

Although Covid-19 presents a new standard of normal, in the future we hope to introduce new workshops focused around useful skill building and continue to provide events that foster connection, well-being, and healing.

This includes things such as help with tech literacy, campfire and outdoor gatherings, knitting, and sing along gatherings. As Moving Forward grows, we continue to take referrals and allow women to self refer.

Thank you to the community partners, donors, instructors, and other shelter staff who make this program possible.



School Programming

The shelter has continued programming and received funding to run a peer-to-peer program at the local schools.

Peer-to-peer program. Staff member: Anna

We received funding for a peer support and a healthy relationships program for the Revelstoke Secondary School (RSS). As you all are aware, this year has been very unusual. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused some changes to our programming due to school going online.

Prior to Covid-19 RWSS staff were going into RSS.

It initially started as a lunch time talk with a few students that had either self referred or referred by teachers or counsellors.

As the school year progressed staff were invited in to the classroom to present about healthy relationships and to support dialogue around relationships and mental health.

It is hoped with the new school year we will return to the class room and continue talking with the youth at RSS.

Moving Mountains Coordinator Taha Attiah



The Moving Mountains Men's Outreach Program has been running for over two years serving a diverse group of men throughout the community with bi-weekly gatherings. This year we had a total of 210 attendances to groups, mostly a core group of 10 group members. This is up from the previous year and demonstrates our strong core group of support that

has built up over time.

I'm proud to say that throughout this year, and for the total two years we've been operating, our focus has changed and adapted to provide the types of support that our members need from us.

Outside of the groups, outreach to the community to support men in need comes in many forms. Supportive conversations and relationship building is important for recruiting members to the group as well as individual support when a community member is feeling under-supported.

For the men's group, the year began with a season of woodcarving and meals shared in our 2nd Street gathering space during the winter months. The summer and fall brought us a season of outdoor campfire gatherings, held at the Forestry Museum and still is the most popular and well-attended form of gathering, in collaboration with the Aboriginal Friendship Society. Brian Sumner, the men's campfire coordinator, has stepped down from his role but continues to attend and support the group in various other ways, including supporting myself.

Mid year, the Women's Shelter moved spaces and began renting the basement space in the United Church, including a large hall and a smaller office and gathering room. With help from all the staff, we were able to put our own touches on the space itself.

Dealing with Covid-19

This past year of programming ended on March 31st, with two of the most difficult months most of us have collectively faced in recent years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pressures of isolation and uncertainty were felt heavily by participants in our group. For a group that already struggles with social isolation, lockdown and the loss of daily routines was a significant disruption and many of those challenges were heard in the conversations we had as a group.

For the people lucky enough to remain resilient, we saw our community members develop new outlets to cope



Photo: In collaboration with Moving Mountains and the Aboriginal Friendship Society, men gather at the Revelstoke Forestry Museum for campfires. Photo: Alex Cooper.

with isolation, such as Covid projects or baking sourdough bread. The men in our group started at a baseline of isolation that was often filled with the interactions many of us take for granted, in the line at the grocery store, with a passing neighbour on the street, or at the park on a sunny afternoon.

The men's group responded by increasing our meeting frequency, moving from gatherings once a week to shorter conference calls three times per week. We all learned to use zoom (to varying degrees) and the majority of men were able to join the group through phone conferencing. There were heartening levels of support exchanged between members, not just going from myself out to the members.

The resilience that was built throughout that period of physical distancing was not fully seen until the lifting of lockdown. After the snow melted and small group gatherings were permitted again, our group was unable to meet for the campfires that we usually do, since the Forestry Museum remained closed as a park space. Members responded by offering their own backyards and lawns as places for us to gather safely while physically distanced. Several of the men who see each other outside the group and occupy the same bubbles began carpooling and meeting to support one another outside of the group hours.

This vision, of a peer support group, was a hope that Brian and I had two years ago. That hope has recently become a reality, through favours the men do for one another, such as either fixing a cane, calling one another during a medical challenge, or helping change the batteries in someone's hearing aid.

We are looking forward to another year of support and gatherings in 2020/2021!

Revelstoke Community Response Network

Coordinator Lisa Cyr



Needless to say, this year has been an unusual one. This year the CRN carried on with its education, outreach and awareness work in a number of ways. While the Covid-19 pandemic initially put many things on hold, the CRN was able to regroup and refocus after the initial shock period.

CRN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

During the 2019/20 year, the Revelstoke CRN committee gathered to meet five times, with unprecedented attendance to most meetings. Most meetings saw an average of 10 participants, with some guest participants attending one-off meetings. These include the city's Social Development Coordinator, Jill Zacharias, Jackie James of the Kootenay Brain Injury Association, Jackie Brosseuk of the Red Cross, and Cindy Delaronde of Moberly Manor. The addition of Hospice to the network has also been very beneficial and allowed for new partnerships to take place. The CRN typically hosts four to five meetings a year.

Education and Outreach

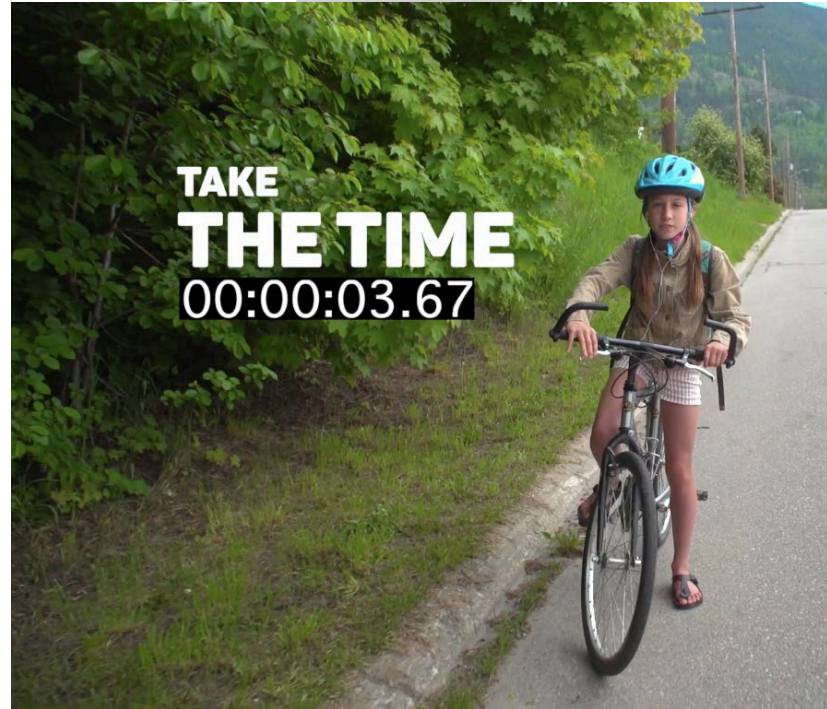
WORLD SUICIDE PREVENTION DAY

This year, the CRN was able to partner once again with the Child and Youth Mental Health and Substance Youth collaborative to raise awareness on World Suicide Prevention Day. The silent vigil saw approximately 25 people who came to light a candle to honour those they have lost to suicide. Social media posts were also shared on community Facebook pages, which included an article that was covered by the local media. The event also aimed to let people who are struggling know that they are not alone.

INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING

For a second year in a row, it was difficult to get the intergenerational work started. The main challenge was the discrepancy between students and available seniors. Once the program did get off the ground with willing teachers and classes, I had barely begun the empathy sessions when Covid-19 hit.

After an initial hiatus, it was clear that seniors were in



need of connection now more than ever, and that awareness around their vulnerability to abuse was also higher. It seemed a perfect opportunity to offer non-contact activities for the kids and seniors through letters, outdoor chalk and window art, and more. Finally a video ([watch here](#)) was created that is aimed for youth, inviting them to look at their ideas around seniors, educates them on elder abuse, and encourages them to take time for seniors.

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

The focus for WEAAD was mainly on the youth. They were distributed an activity pack as a supplementary activity, which would put them in a draw for some art supplies. On June 15th, the video was shown in schools and in the community at large with the release in the media and on social media. Students also wrote poems and did art about what it intergenerational means to them prior to WEAAD.

In town, select local businesses distributed pens and adult abuse self-assessment Bingo cards (created two years ago). The yearly Senior's Tea did not take place, however, due to Covid-19 health and safety recommendations.



Photo: (Left) Screen grab from the senior awareness for youth video and (right) Jonny Davis, Moving Forward coordinator Anneliese Neweduk and Bill Beard deliver groceries for the Revelstoke Community Response initiative in partnership with Southside Market, to help seniors during the Covid-19 lockdown. Image: Rob Buchanan.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The CRN attended the yearly Volunteer Fair, held in November during Revelstoke’s Welcome Week. Last summer, the CRN also did a lunch ‘n’ learn presentation to the local Rotary Club, to talk mainly about its intergenerational learning work, as well as touch on the issue of elder abuse.

The CRN had also lined up a Gatekeeper presentation with the Revelstoke Credit Union and the Okanagan Regional Library, but these had to be postponed due to Covid-19 and other personal reasons.

HAPPIPAD

The CRN had begun a partnership with Kelowna-based Happipad. Together with the Senior’s Association and through the support of Happipad, Revelstoke had begun the process of implementing and raising awareness around intergenerational housing options offered by the platform. Some community information sessions were held at the senior’s centre, as well as the community centre for the community at large.

Happipad is a great fit for Revelstoke as it offers

affordable housing options for those needing a place to stay, provides seniors and home owners with additional support and the potential for positive and long lasting relationships, through a thorough and safe platform. Due to Covid-19, plans for Happipad were put on hold, but will hopefully resume in the future.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The CRN was quick to respond after seeing the need by vulnerable adults to have essential goods delivered – and the widespread, organic response by community members who were posting their numbers and contact information to deliver to these vulnerable adults.

Given that the CRN has an extensive network of front line workers and agencies, it seemed viable to organize a volunteer-based delivery service to those most in need.

Overnight, some 65 volunteers stepped up to help out. The main challenge was still actually finding the vulnerable adults who needed to isolate in order to stay safe. The CRN also partnered directly with the Revelstoke Women’s Shelter outreach workers, who already work with vulnerable adults and help with tasks like grocery shopping, and offer

individual and group mental health support.

As the word spread about the services referrals started to come in from health care workers, as well as self-referral. We also officially partnered with a local grocer, Southside, and set up a grocery delivery program where clients could call in or order online, and volunteers would pick up the following day and deliver.

To date, the program has delivered over 140 grocery orders to adults in need. As the need has decreased over the past month, the programme is likely to change formats to a more personalised service. The women's shelter is likely to play a larger role in the maintenance and delivery of this program going forward, as they have received additional funding for the Covid-19 response.

CRN IN THE MEDIA

- [Elder abuse is an issue, even in Revelstoke](#)

- [Candlelight Vigil for World Suicide Prevention Day](#)
- [Revelstoke's candlelight vigil for World Suicide Prevention Day](#)
- [CRN Coordinating help for most vulnerable](#)
- [Revelstokian creates Community Response Network to help during Covid-19 pandemic](#)
- [Revelstoke Community Response Network delivers groceries for first time](#)
- [Revelstoke elementary school students create art for seniors](#)
- [Locally-made video educates youth on elder abuse and neglect](#)
- [Revelstoke video aims to educate youth on elder abuse](#)
- [You can help prevent seniors from suffering abuse and neglect](#)

Communications and media

Communications Coordinator Lisa Cyr

For the 2019/20 year, RWSS was very successful in its media presence, with multiple articles about its programs and work being featured in the news.

It started early on with discussions around the women's shelter's involvement in the emergency winter shelter.

Events, such as World Suicide Prevention Day (CRN) and White Ribbon Day were featured in the news thanks to feature articles written by the communications coordinator.

Once Covid-19 hit the world in full force, many articles featuring the shelter and its change in protocols, as well as outreach support available to the community were covered by the news. The CRN received much coverage for its initiative in kick starting the Social Response program, which the shelter's outreach coordinators soon helped get off the ground. The CRN also received coverage for its Intergenerational programming during Covid-19. Most recently, the release of Uplift magazine garnered attention from the media, with three articles in the local news.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The shelter's Facebook page grew steadily over the past year, with 92 new followers this year. Staff and the communications coordinator uploaded regular and relevant content to the page, which varied from domestic violence related articles, health and wellness tips, and Covid-19 updates. The number of followers grew from 115 in July 2019, to 207 in July 2020. There are currently plans to create an Instagram page for the 2020 year, which will also help grow its online presence.



Revelstoke Women's Shelter Society

@RevelstokeWomensShelter · Non-profit organisation

Contact Us

revelstokewomensshelter.com

Home Videos Photos About More

Liked

Message

Q

...

UPLIFT MAGAZINE

In June 2020, frontline worker and writer, Emily Kemp produced and released a feature magazine *Uplift* (see p. 5) into the community, which was very well received by the media, community organizations and individuals.

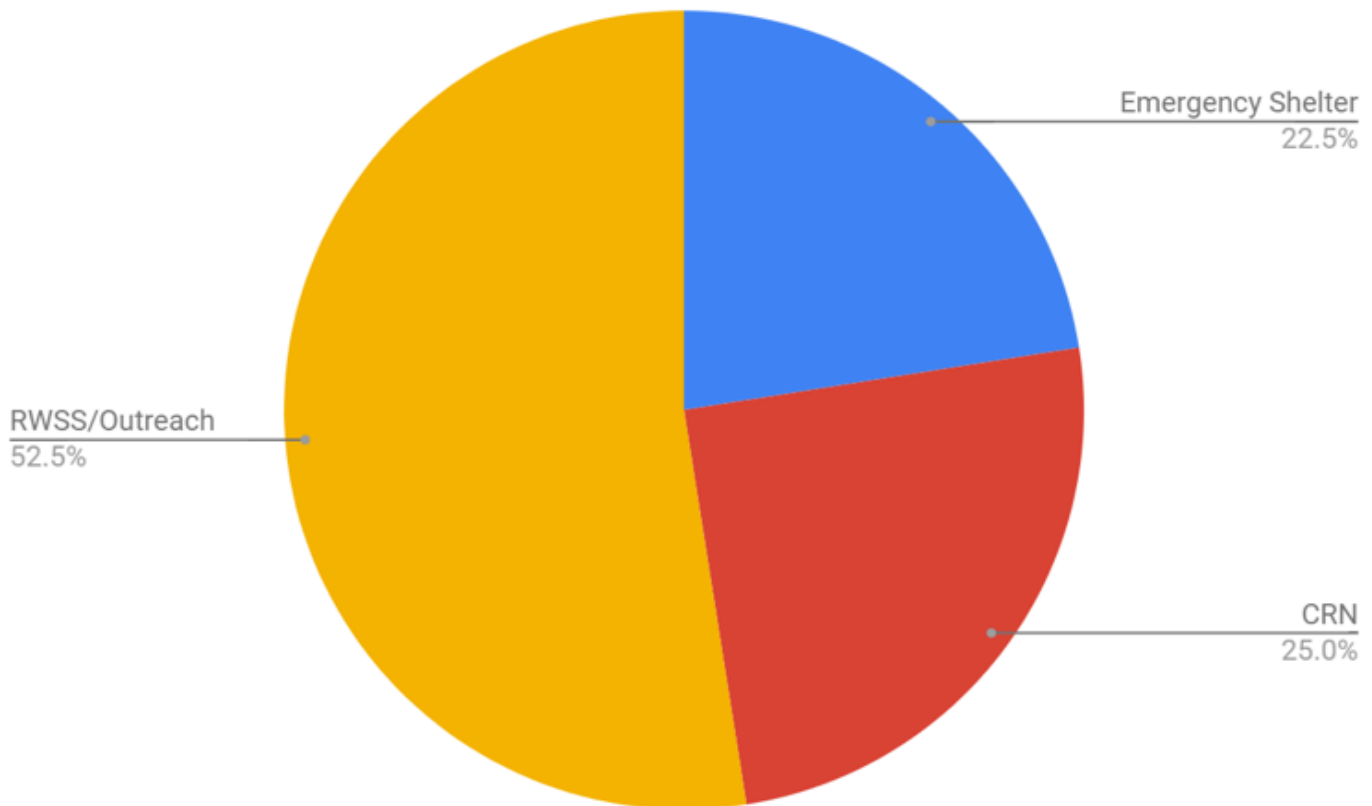
EVENTS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This year, the women's shelter held many successful events, which saw unprecedented attendance.

HALLOWE'EN FUNDRAISER

Once again, the women's shelter put on its Halloween fundraiser at the community centre, which took considerable work to put on. While the event was successful, attendance was sporadic throughout the evening. The event was successful in raising funds for the shelter and in providing a social outlet for in-house clients, Moving Forward clients and community members alike.

RWSS MEDIA COVERAGE BY TOPIC



WHITE RIBBON DAY

For this year's December 6th vigil, the shelter hosted an evening of music, discussion and presentation at Dose Café. Community members came to speak on the microphone in between sets of music by Maggie "May" Davis.

Tables in the café had tea lights to create ambiance, and the photos of the murdered women were on display along the windows, along with flowers and resources. Many community members came out to this event and filled the café (between 25-30 participants).

V-DAY

Instead of a march for V-day, this year the women's shelter organized a large group breath work, sound and group meditation, which also saw a great response from the community, with participation from many new people.

The event was co-facilitated in partnership with local yoga studios and breath practitioners (Giles Shearing, Anna Mint, Noelle Bovon and Kat Tanneberg), and took place in the dance studio in the Community Centre. Approximately 27 people took part in this event, with very positive feedback.

PREVENTION WEEK

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was not possible to organize our usual prevention week events. Instead, the Moving Forward coordinator focused on sending out

resources on staying safe and healthy, mental health and wellness tips as well as providing online yoga classes that week, which were well attended.

Community involvement

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The women's shelter has been committed to the collective impact process that has been spearheaded by the city's

Social Development coordinator, Jill Zacharias. Vibrant Revelstoke: Affordability for All is a process that looks to address affordability issues through long lasting and positive solutions. The shelter's executive director and communications coordinator both sit on the Leadership Roundtable, which meets monthly to discuss the direction of the work taking place.

Outreach coordinators and communications coordinator sit on the Listening Team, in order to gather stories of lived experience of affordability issues and help advocate for the needs of vulnerable men and women in this community.

Lisa also heads the Neighbourhood Connections team, which seeks to create stronger community ties and more resilient communities through this.



