

## **West Kootenay Women's Association**

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July 12, 2002

Ms. Lynn Stephens  
Minister of State for Women's Equality  
MCAWS  
Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC  
V8V 1X4

Dear Ms. Stephens,

I hope the information provided in this short summary of the West Kootenay Women's Association (WKWA) will help you to review and reassess decisions made regarding the funding of Women's Centres in British Columbia. We are a vital source of information and support for the women of this province. We are often the first point of contact for women dealing with abusive relationships, alcohol and drug issues, assault, poverty, and work issues. We are the organizations that have worked so hard for years to ensure that women could hold their rightful place in all levels of government and employment as well as in their own families, communities, and educational institutions.

WKWA, now in its 30<sup>th</sup> continuous year of operation, runs the oldest rural Women's Centre in Canada and we are one of a very few centers that holds the mortgage on its own building. Over the years we have given birth to several spin-off organizations including the Amy Beaulieu Transition House and The Advocacy Centre. We are governed by a Coordinating Collective (Board) and currently have three staff members. We operate on a consensus basis and model respect, honesty, and social justice in our long-standing agency.

Our major project, the Nelson and District Women's Centre, serves women of all ages, sexual orientations, religious beliefs, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and social and family affiliations. The Center houses the Association offices as well as the drop-in, library, free store and resource and referral services. We develop and host workshops to empower women in all areas of their lives. Our statistics show that we have served 2711 women in the last 12 months, notably 891 of those women came to the Women's Centre for food, and 876 came to the Centre to find clothing for themselves and their families.

Our budget is funded 50% by the BC Ministry of Communities, Aboriginal and Women's Services (our core funding); 25% of our funding is from the BC Gaming Commission; and the remaining 25% of our budget is Federally funded through Status of Women Canada. Our total budget amounts to approximately \$100,000 annually.

WKWA (West Kootenay Women's Association) runs several programs through the Women's Centre, including:

Women's Economic Equality Project

Women's Drop-In – open Tuesday through Friday, 12 – 4pm.  
Volunteer Training Course – participants go through a 10 week training course and receive a Certificate of Completion, which is accepted at most agencies throughout the region. The certificate has helped several candidates secure full time employment.  
Food distribution  
Clothes distribution  
Bathroom facilities, including tub  
Resource center: library (over 2500 volumes of feminist literature); use of office equipment – computer, Internet, copy machine, typewriter, desk space, telephone; information on food security, abuse survivors, childcare and parenting, education and training, emotional support, employment, health issues, housing, legal issues, miscellaneous community information, newcomer orientation, poverty and social assistance, sexual harassment, violence and assault, history of women and feminism, economics, drug and alcohol abuse and more.  
Referral services: to all appropriate agencies in the community (legal, advocacy, abuse counseling etc.)  
Bread and Roses Community Kitchens  
The Truth About Barbie – (In collaboration with the Advocacy Centre) a high school based program which challenges teens to face eating disorders and body image head on.

The Women's Centre also hosts many events such as:

Weekly lesbian/bisexual group meeting  
Weekly support group for those affected by increasing poverty  
Weekly Tai chi and Chi Gong  
Women in Work Transition Group (8 week sessions)  
Annual Women's Festival held in August – this is a woman only festival featuring women performers, presenters, and participants.  
West Kootenay Women's Association Newsletter 7x annually.

Our staff members play a vital role on several community committees, including:

VAWIR - Violence Against Women in Relationships  
NCOH – Nelson Committee on Homelessness , which has, over the last year, brought over \$500,000 of Federal monies (through SCPI, an initiative of the National Housing Initiative) into the community (other members include: Nelson and District Community Resources Centre, The Advocacy Centre, Ministerial Assembly, Selkirk College, Mental Health, Nelson Youth Centre, West Kootenay/Boundary Addiction Services)  
ENUF – Energetic Nelsonites United for Food / Food Coalition – a group of community agencies who are in the process of creating a Center for Food Security in the Nelson Area  
POVERTY ACTION GROUP – to look at and strategize around the increasing poverty most recently caused by the Liberal cutbacks to social programs (other members include: BCGEU, Nelson United Church, ANKORS (AIDS network), NCSC (Nelson Community Services Centre), the Advocacy Centre, Career Development Services).

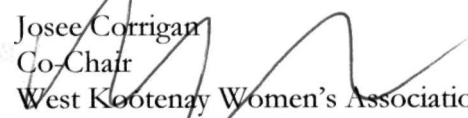
NELSON WOMEN'S HEALTH WORKING GROUP  
WEST KOOTENAY WOMEN'S COUNCIL  
WOMEN'S OUTDOOR CLUB  
BC COALITION OF WOMEN'S CENTRES

Attached please find a copy of the WKWA and the Nelson & District Women's Centre pamphlets.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us in Nelson.

Sincerely,

Penny Ruvinsky  
Coordinator  
Women's Economic Equality Project  
West Kootenay Women's Association

  
Josee Corrigan  
Co-Chair  
West Kootenay Women's Association