

**Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Women's Services and Child Care Department**

AUG/02 (Revised)

**WOMEN'S CENTRES
SIX MONTH REPORT**

Please check period being reported:

For the period: January 01, 2003 – June 30, 2003
 July 01, 2003 – December 31, 2003

Society Name: West Kootenay Women's Association
Women's Centre Name: Nelson Women's Centre
Contact Name: Cheryl Dowden, Coordinator

*The following items are Section 6.1 of the Component Schedule and are
the agreed upon elements to be included in the six month report.*

1. Component Schedule item 6.1a: The number of women who received service and/or were referred and the type of referral.

Please enter data requested in Appendix 1.

2. Component Schedule Item 6.1b: Information regarding possible service gaps and any measures the contractor may have taken to address them.

Please provide sufficient detail to clearly indicate the activities your centre has been involved in during the reporting period.

Service gaps

Housing - There is a definite lack of safe and affordable housing for women and children in Nelson and District.

Food and Nutrition - Lack of an adequate centralized food distribution centre in Nelson means that women and children in need are not meeting their basic food and nutritional needs. Food donations attract a large percentage of women in need to our drop-in services.

Economic Opportunities for Women - Many women who use our services express a frustration with unemployment, underemployment or with being unable to find meaningful work that matches their skill-set or interests.

Action Taken

Housing - The Nelson & District Women's Centre continues to be involved with the work of the Nelson committee on Homelessness. The SCPI (Supporting Community Partnership Initiative) was awarded funding in 2002 from the National Housing Initiative to purchase the Ward St. building that will provide short-term and transition housing for the homeless.

Food and Nutrition - The Women's Economic Equality Coordinator has been representing the Nelson Women's Centre on the Food Coalition over the past 2 1/2 years. The Food Coalition received funding from the Federal Ministry of Labour to improve the situation of food security in Nelson. The Food Coalition is working towards creating a centralized food distribution centre in Nelson. WKWA is administering the funds for this project.

Economic Employment Opportunities for Women - WKWA received funding from the Canadian Women's Foundation to run a Women's Cooperative Training Program. This Program provided 12 weeks of training in micro-enterprise and cooperative development for 12 rural women. We are currently seeking multi-year funding for further CDI programs.

3. Component Schedule Item 6.1 c: Participation/coordination in community events, media events, workshops, and/or committees.

Please provide information, in point form, on the nature of the activities your centre has participated in and/or coordinated during the report period.

- Participated In local VAWIR committee meetings
- Represented WKWA on the West Kootenay Women's Council
- Represented WKWA on the Transition House Advisory Committee
- Participated as a Mentor on the Safer Spaces Project for GLBT Youth
- Worked with representatives from the Transition House and Advocacy Centre in planning media Interviews for Prevention of Violence Week
- Held a Five Feminist Minutes International Women's Day Event. There were 100 women in attendance.
- Provided a feminist analysis of Issues affecting women by providing commentary in the media.
- Staff provided a variety of media with Interviews and articles Including Kootenay Co-op Radio, The Nelson Daily News and The Express
- The Women's Economic Equality Coordinator participated on the Food Coalition. WKWA is administering funds from the Ministry of Labour for a Centralized Food Location in Nelson.
- The Women's Centre published 4 newsletters during this reporting period.
- We received a grant from the Canadian Women's Foundation to offer training in Women's Cooperative Ventures. 9 of the 12 women graduated from this 12-week training and are currently developing their cooperative business or micro-enterprise. This project was completed and a report was submitted to CWF. We are seeking funding for further CDI programs.
- The following groups ran out of the Nelson & district Women's Centre: Tai Chi/Chi Quong, The Company of Older Women (COOWS), Queer Women's Discussion Group, The Outdoor Women's Group.

4. **Component Schedule Item 6.1d: Activities and/or summaries of information gathered regarding women's needs, community needs and emerging issues, which may continue to affect women in the future.**

Please provide information, in point form, indicating the nature of identified needs and/or emerging issues.

- **Referrals regarding violence and assault.** Last reporting period we sited a 65% Increase In the number of violence and assault referrals. The number of referrals regarding violence and assault for this 6-month reporting period are identical to the last reporting period. Thus are violence and assault referrals are at a consistently higher level than we have seen them in past years.
- **Significant Increase In Financial/Income Assistance Referrals.** There has been a 35% increase in the number of women seeking support around Income assistance and financial support.
- **Significant increase in poverty and women not being able to get their basic needs met.** More than ever, women are accessing our services for food donations and free clothing for themselves and their children.
- **Significant increase in women requesting support and referrals regarding childcare and parenting.** There has been a 45% increase over the last reporting period of women seeking support and referrals regarding childcare and parenting. As a result of childcare cuts and added financial pressures, we are seeing an Increase of mothers bringing their children to the drop-in in order to get a "stress" break.
- **Cuts to Provincial Women's Centres core funding, as well as changes to BC Gaming Policy has had an enormous Impact on the ability of women's centres to maintain services.** This barrier to maintaining services is occurring at the same time that the demand on those same services is increasing.
- **Legal Aid cuts are contributing to stress and anxiety for women who are now facing negotiating the court system through self-representation.**
- **Cuts to the VAWIR coordinator position mean a loss of paid support for the organizing of a collective police-based and community based response to Issues of concern around violence against women.**

5. **ENDNOTES: This section is OPTIONAL**

(i) Please provide, in order of priority, the 3 kinds of services most frequently requested by women who use the centre (e.g.: counselling, career planning, support groups, educational workshops, shelter for victims, drug and alcohol abuse programs, etc.).

1. Support and referrals re: poverty issues, abuse, housing, childcare, income assistance.
2. Support Groups re: sexuality, health and well-being, etc.
3. Educational Workshops on a variety of Issues relevant to women.

(ii) Indicate in order of priority, the 3 topics of information that are most relevant to the interests of women who visit the centre (e.g.: health, childcare, legal rights, literacy, skills training, abuse relationships, sexual abuse or harassment, divorce, self-help, etc.).

1. Employment and Training
2. Housing
3. Childcare and Parenting

The list of priorities from this reporting period reflect the current reality that many women in Nelson are living in poverty and are accessing the Women's Centre in order to receive support and referrals to get their basic needs met.

(iii) Program concerns or other comments.

As I have stated for the last 18 months, our utmost concern remains the MCAWS decision to cut core funding to BC Women's Centres. It is very obvious to us that the loss of core funding comes at a time when our community needs our services most. Lynn Stephens has stated on a number of occasions that the Liberal government is committed to women in the Province and that the government has chosen to protect Violence Against Women services. Although, Women's Centres have done a great deal of work addressing the systemic issues that support violence against women in our society; and although Women's Centres are often a first point of contact for women leaving abusive situations, Women's Centres also offer essential and stand-alone services that are different, but also as important as the work done by Transition Houses! We have had to cut our Drop-In Services from 4 to 2 days a week due to a decrease in Gaming Funds, and we are seeing that during the 2 days that the drop-in is open, there is an incredible increase in usage. Women and children are using the drop-in more than ever for support, referrals and most importantly to get their basic needs met around food, clothing, childcare parenting and finding housing. For the sake of rural women living in poverty, we urge MCAWS to reconsider the decision to cut our core funding and support us to provide the broad range of excellent and much needed services that we offer to women in our community.

APPENDIX 1
CLIENT STATISTICS - COMPONENT SCHEDULE 6.1.a
A. Service Contacts With Women

Please tick the period being covered in this report:

- January 01, 2003 - June 30, 2003
 July 01, 2003 - December 31, 2003

You will note that the following chart groups the months in accordance with reporting periods. Please enter data for the months covered by the period being reported.

Month (by reporting period)	# of service contacts	# of referrals made by centre
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January	208 (+ 36 children)	50
February	253 (+39 children)	59
March	263 (+30 children)	57
April	239 (+23 children)	42
May	220 (+43 children)	25
June	210 (+40 children)	27

APPENDIX 1 CONTINUED
B. Type of Referral

Please tick the period being covered in this report:

January 01, 2003 – June 30, 2003

July 01, 2003 – December 31, 2003

Where applicable, please enter the number of referrals for each referral type.

Month (by reporting period)	Referral Type					
	Legal (# of referrals)	Financial/ Income Assistance (# of referrals)	Housing (# of referrals)	Abuse Counselling/ Support (# of referrals)	Employment and Training (# of referrals)	Other: please specify referral type and number of referrals
July						
August						
September						
October						
November						
December						
January	0	4	10	2	16	Violence/Assault (2) Childcare/Parenting (9)
February	0	9	7	4	15	Violence/Assault (1) Health (7) Childcare/Parenting (12)
March	0	3	2	* see (violence & assault)	21	Violence/Assault (17) Sexual Harassment (1) Childcare/Parenting (11)
April	0	4	10	0	12	Violence/Assault (1) Childcare/Parenting (7) Health (3)
May	1	0	4	0	13	Violence/Assault (1) Childcare/ Parenting (4) Health (1)
June	7	3	10	0	1	Childcare/Parenting (2), Health (4)