

ANNUAL REPORT



2012-2013

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VISION STATEMENT

BC Families in Transition is the province's premier agency for all family members facing change and challenges in their relationships. BCFIT's professional staff combines current knowledge with training to provide a wide range of caring, timely, and effective services.

MISSION STATEMENT

BC Families in Transition helps children, youth, and adults manage the challenges of separation, divorce, or transition to a new family structure. Our highly qualified staff, working with other community agencies, provides information and practical and emotional support so people facing these challenges can make the decisions that are best for everyone. BCFIT believes all individuals can find ways to move forward in their lives when family relationships have changed or are changing. Richard Routledge, M.A., R.C.C. – Executive Director

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

FIRST RESPONSE SERVICES

Raji Goel, Dip. Office Admin
Sandra Teiffel, BA, Dip Ed
Leigh Wilkins, Dip Legal Assistance
Derek Wilson*
Deborah Puymon, Legal Assistant*
Katie Lutes, BEd, MPC (in progress)*
Maryam Malekie, MA (in progress)*

PARENTING AFTER SEPARATION

Lionel Zelniker, M.A., M.S.W.
Donnarose Law, B.A., B.Ed.
Doug Woodall, M.S.W.,
Dip. Process-Oriented Psychology
Jane Taylor Lee, M.A., C.C.C.

LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Pam Rudy, B.Ed. – Legal Support Services Coordinator
Doug Woodall, M.S.W.,
Dip. Process-Oriented Psychology
Leigh Wilkins, Dip. Legal Assistance
Marie-Christine White,
Comprehensive Family Law Mediator
Theo Schmidt, Certified Financial Planner

COURT SUPPORT

Tammy van Hinte*
Theresa Link*
Anna Beatch*
Riley Lalonde*

COUNSELLING & THERAPY SERVICES

Susan Farr, MEd, RCC
John Ricker, MA, RCC
Hazel Loewen, MA, RCC
Jette Midtgaard, MSc (Clin. Psych.), RCC
Rebecca Corcoran, MA, RCC
Amy Guest, MA (in progress)*
Angela Manley, MEd (in progress)*
Angela Spooner, MA, RCC*
Ava Bahrami, MEd (in progress)*
Barbara Green, MA
Barbara Peterson, MA
Brigitte Breault, MEd, RCC, Registered
Psychologist*
Chris Rowand, MA, RCC
Danyel Knapp-Fisher, MA (in progress)*

Donnarose Law, BA, BEd
Dawn Cox, MEd, RCC
Elinor Bazar, MA (in progress)*
Gaylene Turner, MA (in progress)*
Lauri Truant, MA, RCC
Lionel Zelniker, MA, MSW
Luciana Daghum, MA, CCC
Maryam Malekie, MA (in progress)*
Maxine Fisher, MEd, MTA
Mitra Jordan, MA, RCC
Sarah Chettleburgh, MEd, CCC*
Sophie von Herrmann, MA
(Expressive Therapies)
Teresa Norris, MEd, RCC

“BEHIND THE SCENES”

Computer Technician

Melvin Klassen, BSc*

Fundraising

Patricia Shuckburgh, BEd*
Derek Wilson
Ari Hershberg, Dip Business & Admin*
Jane Taylor Lee, MA
Paul Miller, PhD*

*Volunteer during the past year

STATEMENT OF VALUES

Safety and Well-being – We are committed to the ideals of safety, well-being, and justice for all family members, with the welfare of children our top priority.

Responsibility – We are committed to the highest standards of excellence in service-delivery and organizational management. This includes responsible, compassionate, and ethical care for everyone who uses our services as well as a commitment to ongoing training and support for our staff and volunteers.

Autonomy – We believe people are responsible for making decisions that are right for them in their own lives. Our role is to support this process.

Diversity – We embrace diversity, including that of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, ability, income, and sexual orientation.

Inclusion – We are committed to creating an inclusive workplace that welcomes input from all staff, contractors, volunteers, members, and clients. As a team, we draw on the resources, skills, and abilities of our team members in order to best serve our clients.

Respect – We are committed to respectful behaviour and communication, both within our workplace and in our community.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been another year of astonishing accomplishments for British Columbia Families in Transition.

We have, of necessity, faced a number of transitions that no organization could have managed better. We are, after all, experts in managing transitions.

We were compelled to find new premises. The move involved months of work in identifying locations, negotiation of a lease, renovations, furnishing and relocating. Naturally, this had an impact on services before and after the move. We have recovered and continued to provide a high level of service with most program areas not significantly impacted by this transition.

We do indeed need to thank Vancity Credit Union and the Law Foundation for their very generous assistance. We simply did not have the financial means to make that move without them. This was a very well managed transition.

We faced transitions in funding. The funding tide ebbs and flows as funding sources move from priority to priority. It is a challenge every year. We have survived the hazards of these changes extremely well for years – ever since Richard came on board. This year we were hit hard, and late in the year. The problem with getting hit late in the year is that it offers little flexibility to respond. The problem with getting hit hard is that an immediate response is required. We managed to ensure that funding was present to meet the contractual obligations implicit and explicit in our grants, just. But programs did suffer and significant restructuring was required. The board and Richard worked very hard. In the end, significant staffing changes had to be made through the last quarter and a cautious approach taken going forward into the next year. This was difficult for our staff, both those who had to leave and those who remained. It was a source of tremendous anguish for the board and for Richard. Our staff demonstrated what they are made of through this process in terms of their compassion, professionalism and integrity. It won't be forgotten.

And, most challenging of all we begin to face a transition in leadership. First and foremost Richard Routledge our Executive Director, will be leaving. After managing so many demanding challenges this year, Richard needs to manage a health challenge. Nobody can replace Richard. This is true of all of our staff, but especially true of him. We owe a tremendous amount of our success, even our survival in these difficult times for non-profits, to him. We are experts at transitions. We will get through this, but it is saddening. The board is engaged in a search for an interim director until such time as the position can be permanently advertised. We begin the process of replacing our Executive Director but we know that we will not be replacing Richard Routledge and everything he has meant to this agency.

I too will be transitioning. This was my sixth and last year on the board. I want to thank the board members with whom I have served, Richard, the BCFIT team of staff and volunteers and our funders for providing me with one of the richest experiences of my life.

Bruce McGuigan, President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Despite some daunting challenges this year, BC Families in Transition managed to deliver a consistently excellent standard of care in all programs in child and adult counselling, legal support, and relationship education for families, while struggling with a major relocation to new physical space and then having to adjust to a major funding setback. The fact that we were able to do this with all programs intact, serving thousands of people of all ages with almost no disruption to the delivery of our services, is a huge testament to the dedication and commitment of all our staff, contractors, and volunteers. The grateful comments and testimonials we received from

our clients in every program throughout the year provide evidence of the tremendous competence, resilience, and determination of every person in our team.

BC Families in Transition has a broad mandate to help all generations through relationship transitions including separation/divorce, family conflict, changes of partners or parents, loss of a family member, and other situations which can threaten the stability of a family. Our organization grew rapidly from 2006 to 2012: in retrospect too rapidly given the instability of funding in recent years. When we outgrew our office space at 812 Broughton Street and had to move quickly into a new, central location which could be custom-built to suit our diverse programs, we incurred a 74-percent increase in our ongoing building expenses. Furthermore, we were not able to predict that just as we were settling into our new facility we would experience significant funding shortfalls. As a direct result we were forced to impose a range of staffing reductions, which were both operationally and emotionally hard on our team. I am grateful to say that several of our team members decided to volunteer some or all of their time in order to ensure continued, smooth service-delivery. In the end, the number of clients we served in each department in 2012-2013 is not changed significantly from 2011-2012, and certainly the quality of our services remained exceptional. As stated recently by one of our major funders: *One can always be sure that at BC Families in Transition we put the clients first.*

Vancity provided \$90,000 in capital funding for our major office move and the Law Foundation of BC provided another \$21,000; these funds combined paid for most of the design, construction, and refurbishing of our upscale new facility at 899 Fort Street. The new space is about 50 percent larger than our previous facility on Broughton Street, and in many respects more functional as it was designed specifically for our programs and is divided into a “front” and a “back” space, the latter being allocated principally to child-therapy and group programs. As stated in last year’s Annual Report, we are extremely grateful to Vancity and the Law Foundation of BC, and equally to John Berkes and the rest of the wonderful, hard-working people at Dome Construction, who worked flat-out to get the new facility ready for us. We are grateful, too, to Johl Studios for the design, to the firm of McMicken and Bennett for their legal services, and to Ken Featherby at NAI Property Management. We moved-in at the end of August and beginning of September, and our vibrant, widely-attended Open House on November 5th proved beyond a doubt that BC Families in Transition had “landed” and come into its own as a widely-recognized organization with a stellar reputation. We wish to thank the Black Press for providing excellent coverage of the event.

Our entire Board of Directors worked extremely hard this year, vigorously supporting the staff and me through a variety of difficult challenges. Each one of our board members devoted countless hours to ensuring the agency’s continued sustainability through the economic and practical changes during the year. I wish to express my profound gratitude to each of them, and to Crystal Buchan, Obara and Company Chartered Accountants, Malcolm McMicken, Dr Allan Wade and Dr Bruce Tobin, for their support as well.

There are dozens of others who also deserve recognition for helping BC Families in Transition through a very difficult year. I wish to thank the staff of the Central branch of the Victoria Public Library; the Canadian Corporation of Commissionaires; the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors; Peter Monk; our fundraising enthusiasts Patricia Shuckburgh, Paul Miller, Ari Hershberg, and Derek Wilson; Dee-Anne Mayburry; the law firm of Brown, Henderson, Melbye; our newly-acquired volunteer bookkeeper Alex Liu; the various community agencies, government and private organizations with which we partner; all of our members; and the many people who used our services and provided feedback. Finally, I wish to convey my very special gratitude to Jane Taylor Lee and Crystal Buchan for their recent role in working with our veteran team members to develop the first step of a “roadmap” in the 2013-2014 fiscal year.

Richard Routledge, Executive Director

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

This department consists of 2 programs: *First Response Services* and *Parenting after Separation*. This year once again, the department provided direct services to thousands of families and family members.

FIRST RESPONSE SERVICES

First Response Services is the name we give our front-end services team to describe accurately what it does. Our staff, contractors, and volunteers are trained to respond to several hundred phone calls and drop-ins each month, including crisis calls and other urgent requests for help in complex circumstances. Like a triage team in a hospital, the First Response personnel not only attend to the details presented but also anticipate the complications that might arise and make decisions about how best to organize services for each person and each family promptly. These decisions require a great deal of teamwork with our other departments, as well as with our executive director and frequently with outside professionals, referring agents, and other organizations. The quality of the outcomes for family members and children’s safety are the team’s top priorities.

We made use of several personnel this year in First Response Services: chiefly staff member Raji Goel, contractors Sandra Teiffel and Leigh Wilkins, and volunteers Deborah Puymon, Maryam Malekie, Katie Lutes, and Derek Wilson. During the last several weeks people from other parts of the organization helped as well: notably Richard Routledge, Susan Farr, and several of our board members.

Despite the fact that our organization moved to new physical space and was not working at full capacity around the time of the move, and despite our funding cuts and staffing changes early in 2013, we logged 93 percent as many phone calls this fiscal year as in 2011-2012. The number of incoming inquiries and outgoing follow-ups we handled is greater than the number we logged, and probably

reached about **10,000** in 2012-2013 (an average of over **800** per month). First Response Services this year also handled more than **425** drop-ins and **265** email inquiries. Of the calls we received from the public and were able to track, **22 percent** were for legal information or legal support, **17 percent** were for Parenting after Separation, **44 percent** were for counselling services and group programs, and **17 percent** were for information or referrals. The vast majority of inquiries came from Greater Victoria but each year we receive hundreds of calls and emails from all over British Columbia and even occasionally from across Canada and other countries.

Once again this year, our referrals and inquiries came from a wide range of sources. Most came from word-of-mouth but many came from private counselling offices, other non-profit organizations, schools, private businesses, lawyers and mediators, government departments, physicians and other health professionals. Many inquiries involved pre-existing mental health diagnoses for either the potential client or someone in the immediate family. Concerns for the physical safety of a child or other family member are paramount in many of the calls. Our First Response Services team contends with numerous decisions about ethical issues which arise from providing a wide range of services for families, and the so-called 'pre-intake' role of this department is critical.

Raji Goel, our executive assistant, is the department's supervisor and has served as a key figure in our agency for about 19 years. Sandra Teiffel, a retired school counsellor with 30 years' experience, joined us as a volunteer in 2006 and serves as our very dedicated intake coordinator for all counselling inquiries. Our intake process includes gathering information from family members or referral agents; determining the 'best fit' for each person with each program and each team member; identifying in-house and community resources which might be useful; taking care of logistics for scheduling the appointments; and summarizing the available information in a file for the counsellor. She also makes outbound calls to facilitate each of these steps and follow-up on the success of the arrangements. She frequently consults with the executive director concerning ethical and practical issues.

Our First Response Services team has become increasingly multidisciplinary and each team member is trained in providing a vital support service. We receive feedback from clients that the ability of our First Response Services team to help with stress and strong emotions has been essential, as even picking up a telephone to make a call for help can be extremely difficult. Our staff have estimated that approximately **1 in 8** adults who use our services reveal thoughts of suicide, **at least half** report some difficulties with addiction, and approximately **1 in 3** of the children we see either are known to have been abused or display signs of abuse or are the subjects of abuse allegations; therefore the role of our First Response Services team is often fundamental.

PARENTING AFTER SEPARATION

Parenting after Separation is a province-wide program created by the Ministry of Justice, and we have been contracted since 1997 to provide it for the community of Greater Victoria. It is presented in somewhat different formats in other provinces across the country. In BC the format is a fast-paced, 3-hour-20-minute information session with some group interaction and individual assistance. It includes an introduction to the family legal system and a large amount of information about co-parenting, with discussion and a problem-solving focus. Given that the family law system in BC has been overhauled this year with the introduction of the *Family Law Act*, our Parenting after Separation program is an especially important community resource.

Our contract with the BC Ministry of Justice specifies there must always be 1 male and 1 female presenter, and whenever possible there is a guest speaker from the Family Justice Centre. There is also a commissionaire at each session to ensure only pre-registered participants are admitted. This safety feature guarantees ex-partners will not attend the same sessions together.

Parenting after Separation educates people about alternative dispute resolution processes as well as about how to communicate with co-parents and guardians. Attending this session is mandatory for people going to provincial court to start or vary an order regarding guardianship, parenting time, or child support. Because of this rule it is now common to see grandparents or other extended family members who are mandated to attend the session. Current partners of separated parents also sometimes attend.

Although Parenting after Separation is mandatory for many people as part of their legal proceedings, about a third of all participants attend on their own free will. It is an excellent resource for parents who are going through separation or divorce, and for parents who have already gone through that process and who are still working on their co-parenting skills.

This year we were fortunate to have an extra session added to our contract with the Ministry of Justice, bringing the total number of sessions to **36**. This year **893** people registered (**600** mandated and **293** voluntarily), and **676** people attended the sessions (**462** mandated and **214** voluntarily). The average number of registrations per session was **24** and the average number of attendees was **18**. Year after year our Parenting after Separation program is the most widely-requested and widely-attended in the province.

Each participant receives a completion certificate which is valid at court for 2 years, and we are seeing increasing numbers of people having to re-attend when their court cases take longer than 2 years to complete. We also continue to see waiting lists up to a month or longer.

Raji Goel coordinates the Parenting after Separation program and our First Response Services team handles participant registration and confirmation call-backs. Donnarose Law—a veteran front-line service worker with many years of diverse experience—has been facilitating the sessions for us since 1999 and Lionel Zelniker—a social worker and group counsellor for over 40 years—has been doing so since 2002. Doug Woodall—a retired social worker and paralegal with mediation training—has facilitated as back-up since 2007 when Lionel is away, and Jane Taylor Lee—an experienced psychotherapist specializing in work with 'high-conflict' families—since 2009 when Donnarose is away. All 4 facilitators are exceptionally talented and this is evident once again in the

program evaluations. As usual over **90 percent** of them state the workshop was very helpful, and many participants state they wish the workshop could have been longer. This observation is impressive considering two-thirds of the participants were court-ordered to attend.

The workshop sessions for this program are conducted in a large, luxurious boardroom at the Central branch of the Victoria Public Library, a few short blocks from BCFIT's new location. We wish to thank the library staff—particularly Patricia Eaton, Monica Richter, Martin Brooks, Aaron Thom, and Karen Cofield—for doing whatever it takes to ensure everything runs smoothly for us. We also wish to thank each of our facilitators for their skill, enthusiasm, and attention to detail with each and every participant. Finally, we wish to thank Anne Reuvekamp, the local area manager for the Family Justice Centre, and each of the commissionaires for their skills in public relations as well as security.

Richard Routledge, Executive Director

LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

This year marked a special milestone for BCFIT as we celebrated Pam Rudy's 25 years of dedicated and exceptional service to the agency, which included twice serving as our interim executive director. Quite simply, our organization would not exist without Pam! She continues to serve as our full-time Legal Support Services Coordinator and handles much of the front-line client work.

Our Legal Support Services department in 2012-2013 also included contracted advocates Marie-Christine White, Doug Woodall, and (for the first half of the year) Leigh Wilkins, as well as an exceptional group of volunteers and students to augment the services of our team. The volunteers and students included Sarah Magee—a UVic coop student who developed a comprehensive outcome-evaluation and client-satisfaction survey system—and Court volunteers Theresa Link, Tammy van Hinte, Anna Beatch, and Riley Lalonde. Doug and Marie-Christine both deserve very special thanks for their generous and tireless devotion to the program this year.

We are very grateful to our longstanding funders in this department: the Law Foundation of BC and the BC Gaming Commission. In particular, we were very honoured in 2013 to learn that another organization is now using our department as a model for developing a similar service at another location in the province. We are very grateful, too, to our legal supervisor Crystal Buchan, who has been a major part of BCFIT 'behind the scenes' for almost 20 years.

This section of the Annual Report is divided into 3 parts: *Legal Advocacy and Information Services* (which we have provided since 1987), *Legal Information Workshops* (which we have provided since 2007), and *Talking about Money in Relationships* (which we introduced in 2009). All told, the department assisted approximately **4,150** people this year. Once again, **99 percent** of our evaluations state our clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

LEGAL ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

In a challenging year that saw a reduction in available funds which resulted in a reduction in staffing, the legal advocacy team still was able to provide high-quality services to almost the same number of persons as in the last reporting year.

One full-time advocate and a team of part-time advocates provided family law information and advocacy services to **4,010** persons in the 2012-2013 fiscal year, of whom **2,336** (58 percent) were seen in the office and an all-time record **1,674** (42 percent) received service at Family Court in the Victoria and Western Communities Courthouses. Our team also received an average of about **185** legal information calls per month, including the ones we received on our toll-free, bilingual, Legal Support Information Line. (As in previous years, about **10 percent** of the calls to the bilingual information line were in French). In addition, our advocates and volunteers provided support, orientation, and referrals to an average of **138** litigants each month on Family Court remand days, and accompanied persons to court appearances and lawyer interviews.

A major role for our advocates in the Court settings is to link unrepresented persons with the services of duty counsel. In the past year we played an active role in meetings with judges, Court registry personnel, Court staff, and family duty counsel representatives in the Victoria Court to design new procedures for identifying and registering persons for duty counsel service and to provide a list of assigned persons to the Court Clerk. We greet all persons attending at Court to ensure they know they can register for duty counsel service, and then direct them in a timely way to counsel. Our effective volunteers have enabled us to ensure that a staff person or volunteer is in Court to identify persons who seem confused about what occurred in Court, and to accompany parties to the appropriate office for trial or for scheduling a hearing. As always, we provide emotional support to people who appear upset or confused. Our team especially thanks the Court Clerks, judges and duty counsel lawyers of the Family Bar for their exceptional cooperation.

Our team gave priority to expanding our Court support services to the Western Communities Courthouse this year, to ensure an advocate is present each Monday for remand Court. This task presented a significant challenge because Legal Aid duty counsel service is available to only one party; hence the party who is without counsel is often anxious, upset, or confused. Our team members are often the only resource for obtaining information, for directing parties to apply for legal aid, or for providing orientation to court procedures and courtesies.

Legal Information Workshops and Partnerships

In March 2013 the new and much-anticipated *Family Law Act and Regulations* came into place in BC. Our team took advantage of training opportunities as well as additional supervision with Crystal Buchan. We then provided educational presentations about the *Family Law Act* to multiple service-providers and the clients they serve. For example, we gave group presentations to 3 organizations which provide services to pregnant teens and young mothers, as well as to volunteers and staff members of transition houses. Doug Woodall and executive director Richard Routledge presented to mental health professionals at the Canadian Armed Forces Base in Esquimalt. In cooperation with the Vancouver Island Branch of the BC Association of Social Workers, we directed social workers to websites containing the *Guide to the New Family Law Act* as well as to BCFIT's services.

We continue a tradition of participating in orientation meetings 3 times a year at the UVic Law Student Clinic. Similarly we meet with volunteer trainees at the 1-Up Single Parent Resource Centre. We continue to attend at the Victoria Women's Transition House to meet with residents and staff, and we regularly meet with staff of the Intercultural Association, Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre, and Bridges Employment Program for Women.

Our team was honoured to receive an invitation to participate in a project titled "Self-Represented Litigants and the Law of Evidence," which saw the project investigator, Madam Justice Victoria Gray, meet with Pam Rudy and Richard Routledge. Pam summarized our clients' experiences and our own observations concerning how the law of evidence creates barriers for self-represented persons in family law proceedings.

We have ensured regular contact with management and staff of our partners at the local Family Justice Centre, and we are optimistic that the implementation of their Justice Access Centre in late 2013 will provide rich opportunities for cross-referrals to benefit families.

TALKING ABOUT MONEY IN RELATIONSHIPS

BCFIT has provided this service since 2009, to help adults either deal with the financial aspects of a separation/divorce or reduce relationship conflict by working together to understand their finances more clearly. Originally developed with a grant from the United Way of Greater Victoria, this program is now funded in part through our collaboration with the Justice Education Society and in part through fee revenue. A certified financial planner (Theo Schmidt) meets with participants for personalized financial-planning services. The program includes the following components:

- an initial appointment with a legal advocate;
- a 3-hour financial planning workshop called "Separated with Children: Dealing with the Finances;"
- up to 2 appointments with a certified financial planner who specializes in separation and divorce work; and
- a follow-up appointment with a legal advocate.

Participants are given the option of choosing *either or both* the workshop and the services of a financial planner.

The workshop provides a large amount of information on the financial stages of separation, how to become financially literate and organized, and how to communicate with a partner about finances during the process of separation and divorce. Marie-Christine White and Doug Woodall expertly facilitate the workshop component and updated the curriculum this year to be current with the *Family Law Act* in relation to finances, property, and debt. Not only that; the workshop evaluations consistently reflect our presenters' proficiency in adapting the material to participants' needs.

When couples meet with our certified financial planner with the purpose of resolving their disagreements about money and moving forward, they are offered an opportunity to develop a realistic inventory of their financial picture, pinpoint the problems and find imbalances, create a draft plan with desired changes and the necessary action steps to achieve them, and then implement and refine that plan. Typically these steps mean developing a common language for talking about money—in other words, developing financial literacy.

We wish to thank the Justice Education Society, Theo, and the United Way of Greater Victoria for their help in developing this valuable program.

*Richard Routledge, Executive Director
Pam Rudy, Legal Support Services Coordinator
Doug Woodall, Legal Advocate*

COMMENTS FROM CRYSTAL BUCHAN, LEGAL SUPERVISOR

It has been my great privilege to again this year provide legal supervision to our excellent team of legal advocates. As always, I find myself in awe of the number of individuals served and the consistently excellent service that they report receiving.

This has been another interesting year with the coming into force on March 18, 2013 of the *Family Law Act*. Pam Rudy and I attended at the Continuing Legal Education training, *The Family Law Act: Everything You Always Wanted to Know*, on February 7 and 8, 2013 in Victoria. These were two jam-packed days with many knowledgeable and thought-provoking speakers.

The advocates and I have met approximately have increased our meetings to twice monthly to review portions of the Family Law Act and to discuss case scenarios. We are also reviewing the many questions that are being posed by court users regarding the new Act, transition and the processes available for dispute resolution. In conjunction, we have had and will continue to have discussions on the new Act's focus on assessing for family violence and ensuring appropriate referrals and processes are offered.

On March 1, Pam Rudy had an opportunity to be interviewed by the Honourable Madam Justice Gray about the extent to which the law of evidence creates barriers for self-represented litigants. This is an important recognition of the respect others have for our advocates' experience with those we serve. The final report offers interesting insights into the challenges facing the courts and self-represented litigants. Our team continues to look forward to delivering our landmark program and to developing it in ongoing response to the community's needs.

Judges, lawyers and individuals continue to give me very positive feedback about the pivotal role the advocates are playing in the smooth running of family remand days at both the Western Communities and Victoria courthouses. We have much to be proud of and much to look forward to in the upcoming year

Crystal Buchan, Legal Supervisor

COUNSELLING AND THERAPY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

This section is divided into 4 parts: an *Overview of the Department* followed by *Individual, Couple and Family Therapy*; our various *Group Counselling Programs*; and a relatively new program called *All About Me* for children and youth in MCFD care. BCFIT is deeply grateful to the United Way of Greater Victoria, the BC Gaming Commission, the Victoria Foundation, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the Variety Club—the latter of which was a new source of funding for us in 2012.

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT

Our agency has offered group counselling programs since 1979, and an array of individual, couple, and family therapy services since 2006. Since then we have greatly expanded the size, scope, and versatility of this department to serve all ages, all walks of life, and all family configurations. By now we are able to respond to almost any family situation in which changes in relationships are the primary concern. This fiscal year the department served **921** people in a combination of approximately **4,000** individual/couple/family therapy appointments and **222** group-counselling sessions.

Over the last several years we assembled an impressively diverse team of very professional therapists. Nearly all of them are either RCCs (registered clinical counsellors), members of professional associations in art therapy or expressive arts therapy or music therapy, or nearing the end of their graduate or post-graduate training and completing 'supervised hours' for final qualifications. **Many of our therapists volunteer 100 percent of their time.** Those who have been completing 'supervised hours' for their final qualifications were selected from a pool of **more than 500 applicants** from all over the world over the past 6.5 years.

During the 2012-2013 fiscal year the following people served in our Counselling Team: Susan Farr, MEd, RCC; John Ricker, MA, RCC; Rebecca Corcoran, MA, RCC; Hazel Loewen, MA, RCC; Jette Midtgaard, MSc (Psych), RCC; Brigitte Breault, MEd, RCC, Registered Psychologist; Dawn Cox, MA, RCC; Mitra Jordan, MA, RCC; Teresa Norris, MEd, RCC; Sophie von Hermann, MA (Expressive Therapies); Maxine Fisher, MEd, MTA (Registered Music Therapist); Chris Rowand, MA, RCC; Luciana Daghum, MA, RCC; Ava Bahrami, MEd (in progress); Maryam Malekie, MA (in progress); Danyel Knapp-Fisher, MA (in progress); Elinor Bazar, MA (in progress); Angela Spooner, MA, RCC; Sarah Chettleburgh, MEd, CCC; Gaylene Turner, MA (in progress); Barbara Peterson, MA; Lionel Zelniker, MA, MSW; Donnarose Law, BA, BEd; Barbara Green, MA; Lauri Truant, MA, RCC; Amy Guest, MA (in progress), and Angela Manley, MA (in progress). Of these 27 people, the latter 6 served as group facilitators but did not provide individual counselling.

Like our other departments, our Counselling and Therapy Services department regularly contends with child safety concerns, reports and allegations of abuse, Court involvement, ministry involvement, police involvement, intergenerational and intercultural conflict, and a never-ending variety of clinical, practical, and ethical demands. Clinical supervision is vital for 3 different reasons: (1) to be sure we are doing everything possible for those who seek our help, with the highest standards of service quality; (2) to ensure we continue to develop our programs and our agency with the benefit of outside feedback; and (3) to support our team members who immerse themselves in this emotionally-demanding work.

Accordingly, clinical supervision must be readily available at BCFIT and we have provided it in a variety of formats. First, it is provided 'in-house' in individual meetings with our executive director (Richard Routledge, MA, RCC, family therapist), and for students helping to facilitate *Caught in the Middle* with staff member Susan Farr, MEd, RCC. Second, we provide clinical supervision for all department members in group meetings led by the internationally-respected family therapist and trainer Allan Wade, PhD, RCC, who has generously provided this service for us since 2006. Third, we provide monthly group supervision meetings specifically with a child-therapy focus, led by the highly-experienced child-therapy specialist Bruce Tobin, PhD, RCC, ATR. This year we had a wider mix of clinical supervisors than in previous years, as Cathy Richardson, PhD, RCC 'subbed in' for Dr Wade on one occasion and Marna Lynn Smith, BMus, DBCSAT 'subbed in' for Dr Tobin on another occasion. During the early months of 2013, Board member Jane Taylor Lee, MA, CCC—who is an experienced therapist and a specialist with so-called 'high-conflict' families—provided additional supervision

for our practicum students who were working with children. We are very grateful to all of these experts for their enthusiasm and the extremely skilled ways in which they do their work for our team. We continue also to be very grateful to our legal supervisor—family law lawyer Crystal Buchan—as she has volunteered over the past 7 years to assist this department.

Our therapists work closely together to support each client or family. To accomplish this, BCFIT is committed to the highest levels of ethical practice and follows the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards established by the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors (www.bcacc.org). Once again this year, Jim Browne from the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors has consulted with our staff regarding ethical issues. Team leaders at the Ministry of Children and Family Development, too, have provided important clinical consultation.

Our Counselling and Therapy Services department, our Legal Support Services department, and our Public Education department collaborate together actively each day. It is extremely useful for our counsellors to be able to consult instantly with our Legal Support advocates on a legal issue, or arrange for a client an appointment with one of our advocates after a session. We have a truly effective, multidisciplinary environment.

INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE, AND FAMILY THERAPY

This fiscal year our team provided individual, couple, and family therapy sessions to a total of **735** people of all ages. Everyone worked very hard to meet the demand as we faced waiting lists, particularly in the domain of child counselling, and as we adjusted to several difficult staffing changes early in 2013. We miss Hazel Loewen, Rebecca Corcoran, and various contractors, and we are grateful that Jette Midtgaard has been able to return to our team in 2013-2014. We are very grateful, too, for the various talented volunteer counsellors and interns who have assisted us substantially this year.

Since 2006 our team has grown to a diverse assembly spanning a variety of backgrounds, clinical orientations, areas of specialty, and hours of work. We have team members who specialize in working with children or youth, others who work with individual adults, others who work with couples or families, and some who work with almost anyone. This ensemble has proven versatile enough to be able to accommodate almost any family situation, with a choice of practitioners united with a common value set who work together superbly. Some of our practitioners are staff members, some are adjunct independent clinical counsellors, and some of them volunteered much or all of their time this year. (The inside cover of this Report provides credentials and indicates which team members were volunteers). We are fortunate to have such a wide range of therapists, who vary in terms of their theoretical approaches and yet are consistent in their underlying ideology. Some describe themselves as response-based, others as narrative, solution-focused, cognitive-behavioural, Adlerian, humanistic, or as users of emotionally-focused therapy or other approaches, and yet all are 'on the same page' in their work as a cohesive team.

For children, we offer specialized therapy services using methods which do not rely principally on talking. Methods known as expressive arts therapy, music therapy, and play therapy allow children at BCFIT to work through their feelings and perceptions through creative as well as verbal means. Children at our centre are able to communicate and work through their often-conflicting, often-confusing emotions through drawing, painting, drumming, strumming, creating scenes with puppets or dolls or sandtrays, building models of themselves or their families, and more. Older children and youth have a choice of using those methods or a more traditional, conversational approach. Our versatility in working with children and teens is indeed impressive, and we continued to face waitlists once again this year in order to provide these services.

The therapy work our team conducts is often extremely difficult, due to the sheer complexity and urgency of the family situations we routinely encounter. Sandra Teiffel's extensive expertise in conducting pre-intakes in First Response Services enables us to provide the right 'fit' between clients and practitioners. The success and rapid growth of this program would not have been possible without her magnificent effort, skill, and attention to detail throughout the last 7 years.

In 2007 when we changed our name from Separation and Divorce Resource Centre to BC Families in Transition and simultaneously expanded our mandate to help families stay together, we opened the door to a much wider range of counselling. We now accommodate individuals and families with transition issues that include loss of a family member through death, incarceration, military deployment, and other changes besides separation or divorce, and we are seeing more couples who are proactive in addressing their marital issues in order to stay together. We continue to see more men (although not as many men as women), more children and teenagers, and a wider range of cultural and ethnic diversity than in previous years. The proportion of our clientele who identify as non-Caucasian is about the same as for the population of Greater Victoria as a whole.

The number of counselling sessions people can access at BCFIT is not restricted, as long as the therapy stays within our mandate and, based on client feedback as well as consultations with the team and executive director, is deemed to be productive. We have in-house review and consultation procedures for this purpose. Our clients' feedback regarding our counselling services has been overwhelmingly positive.

We are deeply grateful to the United Way of Greater Victoria, the Victoria Foundation, and the BC Gaming Commission for their continued help and commitment in making this program possible, and to the Variety Club which is a new source of funding for us this year.

GROUP COUNSELLING PROGRAMS

During the year BCFIT proudly offered the following group counselling programs:

- **Caught in the Middle:** This group program is now an 11-week, multi-part service for families in which there has been a parental separation and the children are, in a very real way, 'caught in the middle' between the parents. We have been running this comprehensive program for many years for both the children and the parents of the same families, and we now have the capacity to include the grandparents as well. The 11th week of this program is for follow-up interviews, reassessment, and further referrals.
- **Evolutions:** This is an 8-to-10-week program to assist separated or divorced adults to understand and handle long-term grief and loss associated with the end of a relationship.
- **Single Again:** This is an 8-to-10-week program for adults who are in the early phases of separating from their partners.
- **Parenting with a New Partner:** This is an 8-week program for parents in blended (i.e. step) families.

The BC Gaming Commission supports all of these programs, especially *Caught in the Middle* which is also supported by the United Way of Greater Victoria and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. This fiscal year the Victoria Foundation also provided funding and we served **186** participants in our group counselling programs.

Our Caught in the Middle program is very well-known in Greater Victoria, and is possibly the most complex and intricately-coordinated group-counselling program anywhere in the world. It originated as a children's group in 1985 and grew to a 2-generation program in 1987 when we added a parent group. The configuration then entailed 8 subgroups each time the program was run—2 children's subgroups and 2 parents' subgroups on Tuesdays, plus 2 children's subgroups and 2 parents' subgroups on Thursdays—and the intake and coordination involved 2 part-time staff members. Then in 2008, the United Way of Greater Victoria granted us multi-year funding to expand the program even further over a 3-year period, by adding the following new components: (1) a take-home resource kit for families to use to prepare for the group and enhance communication skills before the program starts; (2) a preliminary 2-week psychoeducational workshop for the parents; (3) individualized counselling for children who attend an intake appointment but are either not ready or not a good 'fit' for the group; (4) a follow-up component designed to evaluate the program's success and help determine next steps for each family; and finally (5) capacity for a grandparents' group. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the expanded, even-more-comprehensive program which resulted.

Again this year, Susan Farr handled the coordination of this extremely intricate program, accomplishing the seemingly impossible task of screening and organizing all the subgroups for the different generations and enabling the program to run once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in the spring. The coordination process required matching the participants to make sure they could work together, matching each of the subgroups with the right facilitators, keeping the subgroups synchronized with one another in terms of the program content, and being continually vigilant to identify clinical, practical, and ethical issues regarding custody and guardianship, abuse or allegations of abuse, and more. Whenever both of a child's parents wish to participate in this program, they attend on separate nights. The ability of the coordinator and the facilitators to ensure Caught in the Middle remains a safe and healing place for everyone reflects considerable ability and experience.

There is a great deal of interest in Caught in the Middle within the community at large, and after 28 years of running it, the program still seems to be gaining strength. We are very grateful to all the people who helped with the program this year, particularly Susan Farr for her skill and intuitive flair in program coordination. All of the facilitators, too, have been outstanding: Donnarose Law, Lionel Zelniker, Lauri Truant, Barbara Green, Luciana Daghum, Ava Bahrami, and our practicum students Amy Guest and Angela Manley. The teamwork in this program is second to none.

Evolutions and *Single Again* serve a similar purpose for different clientele. *Evolutions* is a group for adults who are having difficulty moving forward in their lives several months after a separation or divorce has taken place, whereas *Single Again* is for adults who are still in the early stages of shock and grief after losing a cherished relationship. *Evolutions* is a group of both men and women, whereas *Single Again* is always a same-sex group. We have provided *Evolutions* ever since 1979 (it was originally called simply *Adult Small Group*), and *Single Again* since 2007. We wish to thank our former staff member, Paula Murphy, for developing *Single Again*. Susan Farr coordinated both *Evolutions* and *Single Again* in addition to Caught in the Middle, and as always she did a masterful job.

Parenting with a New Partner began in 2006 with a grant from the Queen Alexandra Foundation for Children, and we have continuously refined the content and the format. The purpose of this program is to help parents who have added a new partner into the home and thereby become a 'blended family,' and who have found stress in the new family relationships to be a result. Becoming a blended family is almost always a difficult transition and our group provides a context to examine and enrich the changed relationships, both between the partners and with the children/stepchildren. Staff member John Ricker coordinated this program superbly once again this year, in the process conducting many intake sessions to help couples determine whether a group program or couples counselling would offer a more effective approach. Once again Barbara Green provided all the group facilitation, maintaining a dynamic atmosphere which fully engaged the participants. We provided 2 Parenting with a New Partner courses this year.

ALL ABOUT ME

In February 2011 we received an invitation from the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to create a new counselling program for traumatized children and teens who are involved with that ministry and need intensive help for complex, ongoing family transition issues. The new program was developed in February to April and 'launched' in May 2011. Richard Routledge worked with Nancy Fredericks (who has since retired) and Peter Monk of MCFD, with much help from BCFIT team members Rebecca Corcoran, Sandra Teiffel, and Elicia Loiselle.

The inspiration for the program design stems largely from narrative and response-based therapy and we describe it as a "self-determination and skill-building program for MCFD-referred children and youth who have experienced trauma pertaining to family transition." The name *All About Me* reflects the consistently youth-focused design of the program content, methods, reporting, and evaluation.

In this program we worked with **49** children and teens this year, about equally divided into the age categories 5 to 8, 9 to 12, and 13 to 19. So far the work has consisted of individual sessions, some sessions with siblings together, and meetings with parents and guardians. All the referrals must come directly from MCFD social workers, and the intake process is very closely coordinated by Sandra Teiffel in conjunction with Peter Monk and our executive director. This year the therapy team in this program included Rebecca Corcoran, Maxine Fisher, Chris Rowand, Danyel Knapp-Fisher, and John Ricker. We are pleased that Jette Midtgaard has joined the All About Me team in 2013-2014.

We are very grateful to Peter Monk, who is the team leader for the Child and Youth Mental Health division of the MCFD and our primary contact for this program. Together with Sandra Teiffel, he has been instrumental in helping us 'tweak' the program. We are grateful, too, to Sandra for her excellent work in the day-to-day program coordination, and to all of our therapists who devoted exceptional care in the course of their ongoing work with the program participants.

The clinical work in this program has indeed proven intensive. Our executive director, along with Dr Bruce Tobin, Dr Allan Wade, and Jane Taylor Lee, have devoted many hours to the clinical supervision that has been required to attend to emotional and physical safety concerns, along with other clinical and ethical issues.

We have consistently received excellent feedback from participants and MCFD staff, and it is hoped the program will expand beyond the Core Victoria ministry mandate when additional funding becomes available.

Richard Routledge, Executive Director

TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR CLINICAL INTERNS

I interned with BCFIT as part of my Masters program and I cannot speak more highly of my experiences there. I found all of the staff members to be very welcoming and supportive and I was able to consult at anytime with anyone whom I thought might be a good resource in the moment. I feel the learning that I took away from BCFIT has served me so well in my current career and it has provided me with invaluable practical knowledge. The supervision that I was provided was helpful, thoughtful and diverse (between individual & a group setting) and was given by individuals whom I would consider to be experts in their fields. I really appreciated the faith in my future success shown by supervisors and colleagues. My time there was so positive, that I was sad to leave and continue on with my work in other areas. I am proud to include my internship at BCFIT on my resume.

I am forever thankful for having given a chance to be part of such an amazing organization. I was given the opportunity to be part of the clinical team as an intern under the supervision of Mr Richard Routledge whom I learned from immensely in many areas of my training and practice, by teaching me better and more effective ways of utilizing self-reflective thought and critical thinking in my clinical practice.

I had a chance to observe closely how this amazing organization helped our community in such unique ways and arrays of service that promoted social justice for distressed families in need from all walks of life. The BCFIT family comprised such a magnificent group of caring professionals and staff members who went out of their ways and sacrificed a lot of their time and energy to contribute. The dedication and integrity of all who run BCFIT was and will always be inspiring for me.

COMMENTS FROM DR BRUCE TOBIN, CLINICAL SUPERVISOR

For the third year, I have provided monthly group supervision to about eight BCFIT counsellors who specialize in work with children. This year we have continued our focus on the integration of creative arts activities (expressive therapies) with the more conventional verbal clinical techniques in which our counsellors are trained. This new learning greatly expands their range of clinical tools and options.

Our two-hour sessions give our clinicians an opportunity for informal discussion of ethical, theoretical and practical issues relating to their current caseloads. I've continued to be impressed by the curiosity and skill level of our counselling staff. Once discussion gets underway, the time flies!

Dr Bruce Tobin, Clinical Supervisor

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income Statement

	Unreviewed 2012-2013	Reviewed 2011-2012	Reviewed 2010-2011
Revenue			
BC Gaming	\$99,000	\$133,210	\$114,635
United Way	90,969	93,828	147,909
Law Foundation	91,200	91,200	88,726
Ministry of Justice	26,168	25,753	20,781
Fees & Miscellaneous	65,610	71,699	70,483
Ministry of Children and Family Development	42,000	42,000	12,000
Telus	10,000		50,000
Foundations (other)	73,540	9,176	17,510
Service Canada Collaboration			
	\$498,487	\$466,866	\$522,044
Expenses			
Program Delivery Personnel	\$254,544	\$243,711	\$260,368
Rent & Utilities	63,272	41,135	35,678
Contractor Fees	111,938	143,880	81,600
Administration*	13,006	29,420	22,800
Accounting/Audit	5,216	5,579	5,483
Supervision, Legal	5,000	5,000	5,000
Supervision, Clinical	4,638	6,365	3,856
Telephone, Fax, Internet	7,610	7,567	5,869
Amortization	7,600	7,558	7,695
Advertising	473	2,824	3,607
Security	2,438	858	3,035
Training & Travel	1,355	5,034	3,831
Memberships	370	714	587
Insurance	1,150	1,454	1,165
Program Development	2,833	3,451	3,750
Office Improvements		0	1,067
Deferred Revenue	15,000		33,810
	\$496,441	\$504,550	\$479,199
Surplus (Loss)	\$2,046	(\$37,684)	\$42,845

*includes bank charges, supplies, etc

BALANCE SHEET AS AT MARCH 31ST

	2013	2012	2011
Assets			
Bank Acct, Cash, GST Receivable	\$102,363	\$114,148	\$135,816
Funding Receivable	4,912	2,022	21,551
TOTAL ASSETS	\$107,275	\$116,170	\$157,367
Liabilities			
Fixed Operating Costs Payable	\$ 8,034	\$ 23,076	\$ 17,387
Variable Operating Costs Payable	1,203	555	1,389
Loan	35,000	-	-
Deferred Revenue	-	49,988	33,810
Total Liabilities	\$ 44,237	\$ 73,619	\$ 52,586
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$ 63,037	\$ 42,551	\$104,781
	\$ 107,275	\$116,170	\$157,367

TREASURER'S REPORT

I am pleased to submit this report on the financial condition of BC Families in Transition for the period April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff and contractors of BCFIT, I offer our thanks to our key partners who continue to believe, with us, in the services that we provide to improve the lives of individuals and families. A big "THANK YOU" goes to the BC Gaming Commission, The Law Foundation of BC, the United Way of Greater Victoria, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the Victoria Foundation, the Variety Club, and others.

On the Revenue/Income side of the financials, our partners and donors provided \$460K which was slightly lower than last year's \$515K. Fees were down given a change in compliance required for legal support services. On the Expenditure side, our operating costs continued as expected, thanks to our Executive Director. The only significant change in our operations occurred from our plan to move to newer and larger premises at an increased rent. We made this decision in anticipation of continued funding. However, towards the yearend, a few of our funding sources were unable to provide funds until their own resources could be replenished. Thanks to Vancity, we were able to obtain a temporary line of credit to help us regroup and devise a cost containment strategy. With no option but to make some serious changes in the final quarter of the fiscal year, we reviewed our workforce plan and the contractual requirements we needed to fulfill and then we restructured the operation. At all times, our focus was to ensure a minimal impact on our core programs and services.

Our Net position at the yearend shows a nominal surplus of just over 2K. On the Balance Sheet side our Unrestricted Net Assets are just over \$63K. The future looks promising given that BCFIT is well recognized by the various governmental agencies and foundations. While currently we are experiencing a financial challenge, that circumstance is not unique to us. Like similar agencies, we are confident that our team of experienced and devoted service professionals will continue to help us through this situation. Our hope is that our corporate donors will increase funding, and that we will be able to expand our base of private donors as well. We hope to provide an opportunity to reach a wider audience/demographic which we believe is in need of our services.

In closing, on behalf of the Board I would like to express our deepest and sincere appreciation for your partnership with us. Please continue to believe with us that "lives can be changed" for a better community.

Ken D'Sa, Treasurer

TESTIMONIALS FROM OUR CLIENTS

"Caught in the Middle was a wonderful experience and I am very grateful to [my facilitator] and all of the group members for that."

"[My legal advocate] saved my life – I've been dealing with the same issue for 40 years, and now I have my life back!"

"This interview was very useful. I learned a lot about the BC family law and my rights as an immigrant and as a woman. I know more about the family law and how it works. I also learned about not being disappointed about myself and that I did the best I could do and not to be afraid to speak up. Thank you!!!"

"I have a better perspective of the feelings and fears that are fueling my son's behaviours – it reduces my trigger to react, now I can hear better."

*"BCFIT's Legal Support people gave me great resources. Very informative and clear. I should have done this a lot sooner. Best bargain in town."
"Caught in the Middle has been positive for me. I've seen other aspects of separated parents – other sides of the same problems."*

"This place is really amazing, the people are so great. I asked my daughter if she wanted to come back and see her counsellor again, and she said, 'Yes' and I asked her why, and she said, 'This counsellor gets me.'"

"[My legal advocate] was very helpful and respectful; made the process of divorce much more clear to me, and non-intimidating."

"I have noticed that I really try to listen more and am really careful how I talk to my son."

"[My advocate] was so helpful and kind. I didn't even know what questions to ask when I came in. Got so much helpful information and referral options. Thank you so, so much."

"Thank you so much I am really glad I came in for an appointment and feel more confident in my matter! Thanks so much!"

"I didn't think it was possible to save my marriage. Not after everything that's happened, not after everything we've lost. But we did it. Thank you, BC Families in Transition!"

"I felt [my advocate] understood my situation and was able to direct me in step by step course of action to deal with the situation."

"The service provided to me was done in a most professional and friendly manner. Showed no judgment for either party."

"[My advocate] performed the job in a disarming, informative manner. I was very impressed."

"When the lady at the desk described everything that's offered here, I couldn't believe my ears. It would have saved me and my family so much heartache and so much time and money if we'd known about these services a long time ago. I'm glad we're all here now!"

"[My counsellor] is just excellent. Soooo helpful!! Everything at BCFIT really impresses me. I've recommended it to lots of people already."

"EXCELLENT SERVICE!!"

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