

# ANNUAL REPORT

1998-1999



## Mission Statement

The **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre** provides counselling, emotional support, information and referral services for people of all ages affected by separation, divorce, or family re-organization. We assist individuals in recognizing their options and rebuilding their lives.

***Celebrating 20 years of service!***

## **Board of Directors**

### **Past President**

Crystal Buchan

### **President**

Tim Schober

### **Treasurer**

Murray Crowther

### **Secretary**

Carolyn Bouck

### **Directors**

Suzanne Bell

Mariana Diacu

Ian Gillespie

Tessa Lloyd

Ann McAdam

Neil McKinnon

Jill Turner

### **Staff** (year end)

#### **Executive Director**

Judith Avery

#### **Manager, Counselling Services**

Jeff McIndoe, Donna-Rose Law

#### **Manager, Volunteer & Legal Support Services**

Pam Rudy

#### **Office Assistant**

Raji Goel

### **Contract Counsellors**

Krystal Arndt

Sylvan Foreman

Marnie Hastings

Melanie Johnson

Ann McGregor

Lionel Zelniker

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## President's Report

Our society continues to show the ill effects of a desensitization to violence, cut-backs in funding to government programs and the court system itself, and an increase in families in financial need. All these factors put families at risk, and make the services that **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre** provides indispensable.

Over the past year, **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre** has done a good job of adapting to change. Our staff have handled an ever-increasing volume of telephone inquiries and interviews. Our experiment in increasing slightly the number of paid professional staff hours has shown us that increasing our capacity to provide services is the route to follow in working towards financial security - rather than cutting back services in order to cut costs. The demand for our services is already high, and in order to serve the public and keep the agency afloat, we need to increase our supply of services.

We have not ignored cost-saving measures. Indeed, we have been so vigilant in controlling costs that we risk losing more of our dedicated and talented staff. Jeff McIndoe has accepted another position and we would like to thank him for his efforts over the past two years. We wish him the best in his future endeavours.

We acknowledge the contribution of all our hard working team: staff; the dedicated counsellors who provide their expertise in guiding the various counselling programs; and the volunteers who provide office assistance, legal interviewing, family court support, counselling program support and supervision for our access program. Their patience, caring and professionalism are exemplary. Special recognition is owed to our long-

term volunteers - John R. (three years) and Marion G. (two years).

There are many individuals and organizations who have assisted the agency through inkind gifts, financial contributions, and ongoing training and legal updates for staff and volunteers. Their support is appreciated and we would like to acknowledge their contributions.



**To each and everyone - thank you.**

## Board Membership

As always at this time of year we say good bye to some valued members of the board. **Dr. Ian Gillespie** has left to pursue increasing career demands. Ian's assistance with the development of the Needs Assessment, the Abuse Policy and with updating of materials and information around the "Best Interest of the Child" have been valuable to the organization. He served a term as secretary of the board. For the past six years **Crystal Buchan** has been a champion for **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre**, serving as Board President, board liaison for the Law Foundation, and the United Way, assisting with

improvements to the Supervised Access Program. Both have been ongoing mentors and resources for staff and volunteers. Many thanks to **all** of the board members who provide hours of "technical" assistance and expertise to the agency. They are ongoing ambassadors for **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre**.

#### **Finance Committee**

Maintaining core funding for programs continues to be a challenge. Several of our long term core funders have decreased funding significantly in the past few years, notably the funds from the United Way and the BC Gaming Commission.

#### **1998 - 1999 Funders**

We appreciate the confidence expressed in **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre** by our core funders: the Law Foundation, who supports our Legal & Volunteer Services programs; the Attorney General, for support of our Supervised Access Program and Parenting after Separation Workshop; the United Way, BC Gaming Commission, and the Ministry for Children and Families which fund our counselling programs.

The Board is fine tuning a comprehensive business plan aimed at securing the Centre's financial future into the new millennium. Our thanks to Suzanne Bell for heading up this huge project.

Tim Schober, President

#### **Executive Director's Report**

We are on the threshold of the new millennium. There is much hype around preparedness for Y2K. The question is are we at **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre** prepared for the new millennium? What are the challenges for our agency in the century to come?

The seeds for change in the Divorce Act have been planted by the tabling of "For the Sake of the Children", the

report by the Joint Committee on Custody and Access. If these changes become law, they will increase the need for agencies such as **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre**. It is one thing to legislate child centred rules that mandate shared access, but that will need to be supported by counselling and alternative dispute resolution - for parents, children and adults and legal support. We have spent 20 years perfecting just those services, so the ground work is set. The millennium will see us become "**The Place**" for separation issues.

The Federal Governments' recognition of rights to benefits for same sex relationships will provide another challenge. Coupled with this will be the challenge presented by the increasing immigrant population. We will need to develop programs and knowledge to be sensitive to a much more diverse population.

The family of the future will demand that our counsellors have greater expertise to be able to handle complex family structures (blends of more than two families). Custody, access, and maintenance are complicated issues in the separation of the nuclear family. Their complexity will be multiplied with every ensuing blend.

Funding will continue to provide a challenge.

If we continue to do what we do well, plan carefully (our business plan) and utilize the talents of the dedicated team of counsellors, volunteers, board members and staff, we should be ready for Y2K. Our greatest strength and resource is the amazing team, many of whom are long term members, who support our organization and the clients who need their help. They truly are the foundation that will take us into the new millennium.

### Community Liaison

For years we have wanted a poster to advertise the services of **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre**. Finally we have found some art work that fits the bill and this is becoming a reality. Financial assistance from the Law Foundation's Transition Fund is allowing us to develop a corporate package that will be used to increase the profile of the agency to the business community. Our goal is to sell business on the benefits of supporting employees dealing with separation by providing financing, through their Employee Assistance Program, for the group programs we offer at the Centre.

*"My eldest has really blossomed and seems so in touch with himself"*

*"The group helped tremendously in gaining perspective and distance from the relationship"*

our program and deserve a great deal of recognition for the hard work and time they commit to the groups.

I was fortunate to have liaison with community partners, in the Positive Parenting Project through A.F.S.A. Again, we have been able to do some training for counsellors outside of Victoria. We had two counsellors from the Salt Spring Island Community Centre co-facilitate a children and a parent's group through the Caught In the Middle Program.

Challenges for the future continue to be raising the profile of the program through advertising and further community partnering. Moreover, to keep doing what we do really well!

As I leave my position with **Separation and Divorce Resource Centre**. I am filled with excitement and sadness. I have enjoyed working with everyone over the past two years, and wish all of you the very best wishes for the future.

Jeff McIndoe

### Program, Research & Development

Responding to information from the Needs Assessment (funded by the Queen Alexandra Foundation), client feedback and through the generosity of the Vancouver Foundation, we were able to develop and pilot a program focusing on the challenges of co-parenting. **Kids at Heart ♥ Parents Apart** is aimed at supporting separated parents in reducing conflict and increasing co-operations in this new parental relationship.

Judith Avery

### Caught in the Middle

The past year has once again been filled with challenges and successes. Additional changes to intake and screening has led to a smoother and seemingly more comfortable process for our clients. Feedback from the counsellors in regards to the mix of clients in the groups has been positive as well.

Currently we have a number of experienced and very talented counsellors facilitating our groups. These individuals are the backbone of

### Adult Small Group

Adult support groups have continued to have a consistent level of participation throughout the year. To better assess the long-term effect of group, and the appropriateness of material being covered, we have initiated a follow up at one and six months after groups. Participants have reported a continued sense of well being attributed to attending group. Most indicated they appreciated the support of others going through a similar situation and many felt they would like the group extended. The agency will study the feasibility of following through with this request.

### Kids at Heart ♥ Parents Apart

With the success of the spring pilot project we plan to further develop and offer the program again with the option

of an eight week program or several one evening workshops based on the same material.

At clients request, we provided more short term, goal oriented, one to one support sessions. On invitation from Saltspring Family Place, we provided workshops on communications skills for separated parents.

We plan to continue to build our services and programs around the needs of our clients.

*"It (the program) has made a huge difference in the way I deal with the children"*

### **Parenting After Separation**

312 people attended the workshop sponsored by the Attorney General this year. Feedback from participants is very positive and they feel that it is a great starting place. The workshop focuses on the needs of the children, the parents and the resources available locally to resolve their issues. Two workshops were also presented at Saltspring Family Place.

Donna-Rose Law

### **Volunteer & Legal Support Service**

The relocation of Family Court to the main courthouse one year ago had a major impact on our court support program. It has been more difficult to speak to clients waiting for court. Lack of privacy, and the fact that almost all clients can now wait in the courtroom for their names to be called, have made the support role more of a challenge. On the positive side, we established new administrative contacts at both Victoria and Colwood courthouses. We now have a presence at Colwood court one day per month on their Family remand days.

This year saw major changes to forms and procedures at Family Court. Also, divorce forms were completely revamped. Fortunately, the Law Foundation covered Pam's training in both areas.

Pam's personal achievement of the year was in getting her Certificate in Volunteer Management through Camosun College. This 8-month program culminated in a practicum project in which Pam revised the Volunteer Training Manual. Since the certificate program required having e-mail and internet access, we were able to get the agency up and running.

Thanks to funding from the Law Foundation, Pam & Judith were able to

attend the National Family Law Conference at Whistler. Much information was gathered on topics our clients continually ask about: i.e. spousal support, access enforcement, child support guidelines, and mobility (move-away) considerations.

Over the year we provided:

- **411** clients with support and information at Family Court.
- **416** clients with legal information sessions - pre-separation, lawyer and court preparation.

### **Supervised Access**

The wait list reminds us of a laundry pile - it seems no matter how much service we provide we can never get to the bottom of the pile. In spite of a growing wait list, putting a cap on the number of families we will work with has been a good decision. We can concentrate on 5 families at a time which has meant more effort can be put into helping these families form a plan for graduation from the program.

We provided:

- **18** families with **483** hours of supervision, up **20%** from last year.

Pam Rudy

## Financial Position

For the fiscal year April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999

	<b>1999</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Revenue</b>		
Law Foundation	\$ 39,158	\$ 44,655
United Way	19,261	22,098
Bingo	19,586	20,772
Casino	0	0
Ministry of the Attorney General	44,478	30,352
Ministry of Children & Families	7,000	7,000
Foundations	10,500	15,000
Fees & Misc.	20,930	19,774
	<u><b>\$160,913</b></u>	<u><b>\$157,272</b></u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Wages and Benefits	\$122,691	\$103,767
Counselling	13,373	12,606
Office and Operating	16,214	16,027
Rent	12,777	13,388
Research/Program Dev.	1,719	10,233
Audit/Legal	1,972	5,956
	<u><b>\$168,746</b></u>	<u><b>\$163,044</b></u>
<b>Net Income(Loss)</b>	<b>(7,833)</b>	<b>(2,331)</b>
<b>Surplus (deficit), beginning of year</b>	<b>\$32,129</b>	<b>\$34,460</b>
<b>Surplus (loss), end of year</b>	<u><b>\$24,296</b></u>	<u><b>\$32,129</b></u>

## FUNDERS

Attorney General

B.C. Gaming Commission

Ministry for Children and  
Families (Mental Health)

Sara Spencer Foundation

Vancouver Foundation



*Our thanks to all who financially supported our organization in the past year.*