

2019/20



# ANNUAL REPORT

SUPPORT / ACCEPTANCE / RESOURCES / ACTION SARA FOR WOMEN SOCIETY

**SARA**  
FOR WOMEN



# 2020: A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

The fiscal year of 2019–2020 was a truly unique year at SARA for Women and 2020–2021 is on track to be another exceptional year.

In 2019–2020 the provincial government signed off on SARA employees joining the BC Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU), Jennifer Breakspear joined us as interim Executive Director and then assumed the role of permanent Executive Director, we enjoyed a wonderful holiday party in early December, and we witnessed the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March.

In April 2020 we moved into the 2020–2021 fiscal year and the overarching issue is the pandemic and its effects on our clients, program delivery, our staff, and our communities.

## DONORS AND SPONSORS

At SARA for Women we are honoured by the loyalty of many long term donors. We greatly appreciate the generosity of our donors and the commitment of our corporate sponsors. Thank you so much for supporting SARA for Women!

## STAFF

Although our administrative functions moved online for a few months with some staff working remotely, many more of the SARA staff have been working on the frontline the whole time, in contact with clients and community. The coronavirus has impacted everyone at SARA and, while it poses challenges and stress, the dedication of SARA for Women staff has been awe-inspiring. **The SARA staff are Frontline Heroes!**

## BOARD

The Board of Directors of the SARA for Women Society serve with expertise, patience, passion, and compassion and they were all put to the test through 2019–2020. They spent countless hours in too many meetings to count, bringing their skills and talents to the fore guiding this organization through a tumultuous year. Without their efforts this organization would have been in a very sorry state and we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude. Thank you all!

**Betty Johnston** — *Governance guide extraordinaire*

**Corinne Molnar** — *Board Vice-Chair*

**Marlene Patterson** — *Finance and Contracts committee Chair*

**Pia Ritch** — *Board Secretary*

**Donna Sawatzky** — *Board Development committee Chair*

**Grace Saris** — *Board Chair*

**Lianne Teubert** — *Human Resources committee Chair*



## HUMAN RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

The Order in Council that recognized SARA employees' membership in the BC Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU) was signed by the provincial government on October 28, 2019. Subsequently, union wages as per the Collective Agreement were implemented from that date. We started paying union wages as of March 6, 2020 and all retroactive wages back to October 28, 2019 were paid to employees on March 25, 2020. We also implemented the Municipal Pension Plan for all SARA staff from the same date.

Employer-paid Extended Health Benefits provided by Community Services Benefits Trust (CSBT) were implemented from November 1, 2019.

New management positions (Outreach Manager, Finance Manager and HR / Payroll Manager) were approved February 1, 2020 and internal candidates hired.

SARA has an engaged team comprising 27 Full Time, 6 Part Time, and 44 Casual employees resulting in a diverse team of 77 active staff members providing 21 skilled services to clients through 13 programs.

Throughout 2019–2020 SARA has been proud to collaborate with both BCGEU and Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA).

## COUNSELLING PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

Numbers are down for the **Stopping the Violence (STV)** and **Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE)** programs due to difficulty hiring experienced counsellors during the 2019–2020 fiscal year

### Stopping the Violence (STV)

#### April 2019 – March 2020 STV Stats

- + 67 groups
- + 1279 Counselling Hours
- + 284 Women

#### April 2018 – March 2019 STV Stats

- + 55 groups
- + 1994 Counselling Hours
- + 297 Women

Despite not having a STV Counsellor in Mission, the program continued to serve women in our two communities with individual counselling and group counselling. Masters Level Practicum Students did much of the counselling in Abbotsford and all the counselling in Mission. Reports from women receiving counselling were positive stating they had made some significant changes because of counselling and group work. Some women reported they were finally able to leave an abusive partner. And women in the program reported that they feel like they are more effective parents because they feel better about themselves. Other reports including being able to cope with triggers in more healthy ways e.g. grounding, meditation etc. rather than using drugs and alcohol, positive feedback included learning that they were not responsible for the abuse happening to them and no longer seeing themselves as victims of an abusive partner.



## Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE)

### April 2019 – March 2020

- + 37 Groups
- + 313 counselling appointments
- + 197 referrals to the program

### April 2018 – March 2019

- + 129 Groups
- + 703 counselling appointments
- + 226 referrals to the program.

For most of the 2019–2020 fiscal year we were without a PEACE Counsellor in either office. One Counsellor left in December 2018 and the second in March 2019. Hiring was challenging due to changes in requirements for the PEACE Counsellor position once SARA for Women joined BCGEU. A Child and Youth Counsellor (CYC) Practicum Student was able to provide group counselling in Abbotsford and individual support to a couple of children with direct supervision. We are now fully staffed in these programs and look forward to re-building the programs in both Mission and Abbotsford.

## CHILD CARE HIGHLIGHTS

### April 2019 – March 2020 Childcare Stats

- + 15 Groups (assisted with)
- + 242 children received care

### April 2018 – March 2019 Childcare Stats

- + 45 Groups (assisted with)
- + 683 children received care

The Child Care Worker provided excellent support to all of the SARA programs. She cared for children when women were receiving one-on-one support



and group counselling and was a huge asset to the Pregnancy Outreach Program (POPs) with their lunches. The number of children would include many who attended programs on a consistent basis. Our Child Care Worker moved to Alberta in December of 2019 and we have been unable to fill that position.

## PREGNANCY OUTREACH PROGRAM (POPs) HIGHLIGHTS

### April 2019 – March 2020 POPs Stats

- + 23 Pre-Natal referrals
- + 40 Post-Partem women
- + Lunches served bi-weekly to 161 Adults, 203 Children, and 16 Aboriginal Clients (31% of the population)

### April 2018 – March 2019 POPs Stats

- + 94 Pre-Natal and Post-Natal referrals
- + Lunches were served but records of attendance were not kept

The POPs program has undergone significant changes in the past fiscal year with the retirement of the nurse who held the position for 20+ years and the Outreach Worker changing positions in 2018. Our current Nurse and Outreach Worker were hired in December 2018. They have worked hard to increase the numbers in the program. Bi-weekly nutritious lunches were a great way for women to connect socially with each other as well as taking part in learning opportunities with the Nurse or Community Partners. Relationships with Community Partners have been strengthened including, but not limited to: Mission public health

nurses, Mission GP Division of Family Practice, homelessness prevention, MY House and Hope for Women, Mission Friendship Centre and the Mission Community Services food bank. POPs is now an active member of the Mission child youth committee. The Outreach Worker attends the Mission outreach team meetings. A Facebook Page has been created for women to connect with each other and for the dissemination of POPs information.

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019–2020)

- + Donations up 33% over the previous year (\$76,370). Significant increase in year-end donations in November/December 2019 but early 2020 saw a drop in donations as COVID-19 started to impact donors.
- + \$20K decrease in overall phone costs as a result of consolidating all SARA landline phone services with Shaw.
- + Development of purchasing procedures resulting in better tracking and more efficient payment schedules which reduced the need for multiple cheque runs in a month.
- + On-time financial reporting and collaboration with SARA Board Finances and Contracts committee (FACC).
- + Increased success with grant applications such as the Soroptimist Grant and BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs PSU Mini-Grant.

## WARM ZONE AND PENNY'S PLACE HIGHLIGHTS

### Warm Zone

The women who access the drop-in ranged from those who were completely homeless to those who are housing and living in extreme poverty. Women (regardless of whether they are housed or not) come to the drop-in to do their laundry, have a hot meal, and have a shower.

At the request of BC Housing we converted our Warm Zone drop-in space into a 24-hour COVID-19 shelter that became operational in April 2020.

Through the COVID-19 shelter we serve approximately 24 women daily, providing them with harm reduction supplies and meals at the door. As the shelter is at capacity we cannot serve them inside but we will continue to provide services for them in the Warm Zone parking lot.

Since the declaration of the public health emergency on March 17 2020 we have provided 200–250 bagged lunches weekly to women at the Warm Zone.

Warm Zone actively continues to case manage 106 files which include:

- + 28 women and their children are participating in our **Women Existing Abuse, Violence, and Exploitation (WEAVE)** Program;
- + 11 women and their children who are HIV Positive;
- + and 67 women from the Warm Zone Program.

### Warm Zone Stats 2019 –2020

*(Warm Zone Daily and Extreme Weather (EWR) statistics represent daily contacts, they do not represent new unique clients)*

Outreach	4,309
Harm Reduction	4,458
Clothing	4,331
Food/Coffee	4,927
Computer	2,315
Bus Tickets	3,465
Laundry (sign up)	1,207
Laundry (actual)	1,600
Shower (sign up)	2,467
Shower (actual)	3,182
Sleep	3,948
Other	4,225
<b>Total Clients Signed In</b>	<b>6,029</b>

## Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter

We have been operating Extreme Weather Response shelter in the winters for the past three years. The EWR can shelter up to ten women nightly.

Month	Days Open	Women Sheltered
November 2019	7	70
December 2019	7	70
January 2020	19	190
February 2020	12	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>383</b>

## OUTREACH PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### April 2019 – March 2020 Outreach Stats

- + 3593 women received assistance.
- + We responded to 6021 phone calls.
- + Outreach assisted 1861 women with legal support services.
- + Outreach provided housing support to 1535 women

### April 2018 – March 2019 Outreach Stats

- + 2604 women received assistance.
- + We responded to 5379 phone calls.
- + Outreach assisted 923 women with legal support services.
- + The SARA Legal Booth provided free legal advice to 84 women during this fiscal year.
- + Outreach provided housing support to 1191 women

In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, Outreach continued to provide support to women by assisting and guiding them with filling out CERB applications, rent deferrals and other forms.

The following is a testimonial from a woman who just emigrated from India to Canada.

*“I come from India, I have a language barrier and have no knowledge of resources available. Thank you for listening to me and helping me get a lawyer”*

(Translated from Punjabi to English)

## SECOND STAGE HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS (CHRISTINE LAMB AND SANTA ROSA)

### April 2019 – March 2020

#### Second Stage Housing Stats

- + 75 women and 78 children were housed in our second stage buildings

### April 2018 – March 2019

#### Second Stage Housing Stats

- + 49 women and 50 children were housed in our second stage buildings

We were able to serve more women and children this year because participants completed the program within their time and were able to find permanent housing.

The second stage housing programs are thankful to the volunteers who continued to support the programs and the clients.

The continued water issues and damage due to the age of the building and ongoing deterioration of existing infrastructure have become very problematic and disruptive to the residents at Santa Rosa





## TRANSITION HOUSES (MISSION AND ABBOTSFORD TRANSITION HOUSES)

### April 2019 – March 2020 Transition Housing Stats

- + 89 women and 67 children were served.
- + 1065 women and 532 children were regretfully turned away due to lack of capacity.

### April 2018 – March 2019 Transition Housing Stats

- + 151 women and 163 children were served.
- + 1602 women and 1115 children were regretfully turned away due to lack of capacity.

**It is important to note that the women who were not served in the Transition Houses were given support, assistance with finding other services, and assistance creating an important safety plan.**

Decreased numbers this year were due to renovations at ATH and also the multiple closures of MTH due to flooding and mold issues which included a full closure of MTH.

The old plumbing system was failing and could not continue to support our needs at MTH. We were incredibly fortunate that a local developer (who chose to remain anonymous) stepped forward to offer a very generous donation of all labour and materials to complete the reconstruction job and get our house back better than ever!

ATH saw the completion of renovations provided through federal funding.

The housing programs, which are essential services, began the urgent challenge of contending with the COVID-19 virus and the impact on the programs and the clients we serve. There was much consideration and direct discussion with BC Housing in planning for the clients, procurement of PPE, and the development of protocols and procedures which would be vital in keeping the programs safe for the staff and clients.



## OUR PARTNERS

We would like to express our profound appreciation to the many community partners who support us through their time and donations.

Over the course of the year women and men of all ages committed their time, energy and money, and made it possible for SARA for Women to deliver programs and services throughout Abbotsford and Mission.

Earlier this summer the Board of Directors of SARA for Women undertook an exercise to refresh our Mission, Vision, and Values. These statements clearly define who we are, what we are about, and where we are going. We rely on these statements as guideposts when we are faced with difficult decisions or considering new directions.

## SARA'S MISSION

SARA supports and empowers women to realize their unlimited potential and to live free from violence.

## SARA'S VISION

To be feminist leaders in a just world where all women are respected, valued, and empowered.



## SARA VALUES...

### Feminism

- + We believe in gender equality
- + We stand for women's rights, including reproductive rights
- + We advocate for and empower women

### Integrity and Trust

- + We are consistent in our words and actions
- + We provide clear expectations for women and SARA
- + We learn and grow from our experiences
- + We operate with responsibility, accountability, and sustainability

### Respect, Dignity and Compassion

- + We are consistent in our words and actions
- + We provide clear expectations for women and SARA
- + We learn and grow from our experiences
- + We operate with responsibility, accountability, and sustainability

### Leadership

- + We communicate a clear vision and mission
- + We are courageous and innovative
- + We partner and collaborate.

**FIND US:** Facebook: /SARAForWomen.ca | Twitter @SARAforwomen | Visit our website at SARAForWomen.ca

SARA for Women would like to express heartfelt appreciation to all our donors, volunteers, and funders who make it possible for us to support vulnerable women and children in our communities.

## PRIMARY FUNDERS:



**SARA  
FOR WOMEN**

33070 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Mission BC V2V 1V5  
604.820.8455

[SARAFORWOMEN.CA](http://SARAFORWOMEN.CA)