

2020/21



ANNUAL REPORT

SUPPORT / ACCEPTANCE / RESOURCES / ACTION SARA FOR WOMEN SOCIETY



SARA
FOR WOMEN



SARA Hiking Group

2020/21

ALL COVID ALL THE TIME

As predicted in last year's annual report, this fiscal year has been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on our clients, programs, staff, and communities. At SARA for Women we stayed engaged with staff and clients to determine how and where we needed to adapt and adjust how we were delivering programs and services. This meant being nimble and not getting set in how things must be done. One thing COVID taught us was that there was no benefit to sticking to how we had always done things when everything in our lives was being up-ended. We needed to be prepared to change, to modify and adapt to changing situations and protocols and SARA for Women demonstrated incredible strength and dedication in doing so more than once over the past year.

DONORS AND SPONSORS

You know who your friends are when you see who is there for you when times are tough. A global pandemic would be considered tough times and we were blessed to have so many friends be there for us. Generous donors and sponsors showed up to support our work and help out and we are so very appreciative. Thank you for finding it within yourselves to help others in spite of the constantly changing situation in which we all operate.

STAFF

This past year saw our administrative offices remain closed to the public much of the time with admin, counselling, outreach, and managerial staff working both in the offices and remotely. However, staff in pregnancy outreach, Mission outreach, transition houses, second stage housing, and shelters continued to provide in-person program delivery on the frontlines every day. The adaptability, dedication, and innovation of SARA staff really came to the fore during the pandemic and we are indebted to all staff for consistently showing up in support of our clients and communities.

BOARD

The SARA Board of Directors were also forced to innovate in order to continue to serve over this past year. Meetings moved online and the Board adapted to using Slack for quick collaborative communication. We greatly appreciate the commitment of all the SARA Board members who bring their wisdom, talents, experience, and judgment to bear as they guide our organization. **Thank you all!**

Betty Johnston – Governance committee Chair, Finance committee member

Linda Klippenstein – Community Engagement committee Chair, Executive committee member

Corinne Molnar – Board Vice-Chair, Finance committee member

Kanta Naik – Community Engagement committee member

Marlene Patterson – Finance committee Chair

Grace Saris – Board Chair

Liane Teubert – Executive committee Chair

Colleen Walker – Executive committee member, Governance committee member



Christine Lamb Residence

HOUSING HIGHLIGHTS

Transition Houses

There are houses in Abbotsford and Mission with a total of 22 beds for women/children who are in crisis, escaping violence or who are at great risk of being homeless.

April 2020 – March 2021

- + 80 Women and 67 Children were served
- + 884 Women and 648 children were regretfully turned away due to lack of capacity with increased Covid Restrictions*

April 2019 – March 2020

- + 89 Women and 67 Children were served
- + 1065 women and 532 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 and assistance with finding other services, and creating an important safety plan.

The Transition Houses remained opened at reduced capacity to ensure the safety of clients and staff during the pandemic. BC Housing provided extra support, such as supplies and hotel rooms for clients needing to quarantine or to accommodate overflow clients. The closure of commonly used resources created challenges for clients who would normally access these resources and participate in activities. The implementation of the Transition House COVID-19 Plan was successful, as there were limited exposures and no outbreaks in the programs. Clients and staff demonstrated resiliency with adapting to the ever evolving COVID-19 protocol practices.

Second Stage Housing

Our second stage housing program offers a total of 54 self contained suites to women and their children in both the Mission and Abbotsford communities. The staff support women to live safe, stable and independent lives through individual and group counselling and outreach supports.

April 2020 – March 2021

- + 75 Women & 68 Children were housed in our Second Stage buildings

April 2019 – March 2020

- + 75 Women & 78 Children were housed in our Second Stage buildings

The Second Stage COVID-19 Plan ensured the safety of volunteers, staff and residents. The housing programs were very grateful for the volunteers who continued providing services via limited contact such as, maintaining the foodbank and providing home cooked meals. The biggest challenge was the limited social contact in a program in which community is a core value. However, the resiliency demonstrated by residents and staff was commendable.



Pam's Garden at Christine Lamb Residence

COUNSELLING PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

SARA for Women offers individual and group counselling services supporting women, youth, and children to rebuild their lives following experiences of abuse or trauma.

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

April 2020 – March 2021

- + 0 Groups due to COVID
- + 527 Counselling appointments
- + 219 referrals to the program

April 2019 – March 2020

- + 37 Groups
- + 313 Counselling Appointments
- + 197 Referral to the Program (edited)

August 2020 was a fresh start for the PEACE Program in both Mission and Abbotsford. We hired two PEACE Counsellors who had considerable experience working with youth. Both Counsellors have become a significant part of the SARA for Women Counselling team and the organization. As a result, the Programs are now fully staffed, stable, growing, and making a substantial contribution to the lives of children and caregivers in both communities. In addition, the Counsellors have worked hard to meet the needs of children and caregivers waiting for counselling since groups were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Stopping the Violence (STV)

April 2020 – March 2021

- + 10 Groups held by Zoom due to COVID -19
- + 1715 Counselling Hours most by telehealth
- + 864 individual women

April 2019 – March 2020

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

In August 2020, we hired a full-time STV Counsellor for Mission. In March 2020, COVID-19 hit, and the offices were closed to in-house sessions. SARA for Women provided phones and laptops for counsellors to be able to provide service to women via telehealth. We researched which platforms would be the most secure for confidentiality and, despite the frustration with technology and isolation, the counselling staff provided excellent support to more than 800 women. During this time we observed an increase in women presenting with mental health and addiction issues.

The When Love Hurts group started in January 2021, and we were able to run two ten-week sessions by Zoom with five to ten women in each group. There were technical challenges and a lack of daycare for mothers at home with small children. Despite the challenges, women appreciated being together on Zoom and felt supported by each other and the group facilitator.

Women have reported feeling grateful they had access to counselling during the pandemic. However, some put counselling on hold due to the lack of privacy with children and partners in the home. Staff and clients alike look forward to a time when they can resume counselling services in the office.



PREGNANCY OUTREACH PROGRAM (POPS) HIGHLIGHTS

The Pregnancy Outreach program offers both nursing care and outreach support for mothers and families both prenatally and in the post-partum period. POPs is dedicated to providing women and teens who are experiencing high risk pregnancies with dietary and health information, group and one-on-one support, and referrals to other community resources.

April 2020 – March 2021

- + 24 Pre-Natal referrals
- + 27 Post-Partum women
- + Food Hampers during COVID – 19. Eight (8) times from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, Hampers were delivered to 25 women (52 children).

April 2019 – March 2020

- + 23 Pre-natal referrals
- + 40 Post-Partum women
- + Lunches served bi-weekly to 161 Adults, 203 Children

POPs continues to grow with our Nurse and Outreach Worker providing leadership. In addition, during the pandemic, programming moved to a virtual platform. As a result, there was an increase in young pregnant mothers entering the program since the public health program Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) was not available for women to access. The SARA Nurse was available virtually and by phone to serve the families and the Outreach Worker met in-person with each new client at their home ensuring COVID protocols were followed. Zoom meetings provided learning and socializing opportunities to support the women and decrease isolation. A Facebook group was created for the SARA POPs group with good reviews from the women.

POPs Outreach Worker continued to interact and develop partnerships with community resources providing more opportunities for women to receive service. POPs look forward to returning to pre-pandemic program opportunities to better serve the women in Mission.

OUTREACH PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Outreach provides free confidential support to women and their children who have experienced or are at risk of abuse, threats or violence. Outreach includes information, advocacy, support, or accompaniment to access community and/ or government agencies.

April 2020 – March 2021 Outreach Stats

- + 1588 women received assistance.
- + We responded to 6180 phone calls.
- + Outreach assisted 565 women with legal support services.
- + The SARA Legal Booth provided free legal advice to 62 women over the phone.
- + Outreach provided housing support to 591 women.

April 2019 – March 2020 Outreach Stats

- + 3593 women received assistance.
- + We responded to 6021 phone calls.
- + Outreach assisted 1861 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 1535 women.

Since the peak of the pandemic, the Outreach Program in Abbotsford and Mission received an increase in number of calls requesting additional supports for emotional, housing, legal, and financial resources. However, there was a decrease in women accessing in-person services due to COVID-19 restrictions. The main focus of the Outreach Program during the pandemic was to improve the health and livelihood of women and children residing in our community who were fleeing gender-based violence.

The following is a testimonial from a woman with three dependent children who received financial, housing and legal support during the midst of the pandemic.

“If it wasn’t for the Outreach worker who helped me apply for crisis COVID-19 grants, assisted me in securing safe affordable housing, and supported me with my family matter in court I would have been forced to go back to live with my abuser.”

WARM ZONE AND PENNY'S PLACE HIGHLIGHTS

The drop-in centre provides a variety of support and services to women who are socially marginalized. Women who access services could be homeless, active in the sex trade, and struggling with addiction and mental health issues.

April 2020 – March 2021 Outreach Stats

Shelter guests at Warm Zone	1786
Shelter guests at Penny's Place	833
Warm Zone/ door services	3764
WEAVE	30
HIV	9
Outdoor Prevention Site	568
Bus tickets	3600
Donated Food (premade dinners, sandwiches to hand out in the community)	Approx. 2875
United way hampers	78
Food Hampers/ Community care packages handed out at the door/in community	780
TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED	6990

April 2019 – March 2020 Outreach Stats

Outreach	4309
Harm Reduction	4458
Clothing	4331
Food/Coffee	4927
Computer	2315
Bus Tickets	3465
Laundry (sign up)	1207
Laundry (actual)	1600
Shower (sign up)	1207
Shower (actual)	3182
Sleep	3948
Other	4225
TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED	6029

Warm Zone Connect Event (Pre-Covid mask and social distancing mandate)



WARM ZONE AND PENNY'S PLACE HIGHLIGHTS CONT'D

While we are unable to have the doors open to the Warm Zone drop-in center due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are currently serving women through modified outreach services. Starting in April 2020, the Warm Zone converted into a women's only capacity extension shelter where we have operated at capacity with five shelter beds. Each of these women are welcome to stay 24/7 and can access three meals a day plus snacks, showers, laundry, advocacy, resources, and a warm and safe place to stay. Additionally we see approximately 22 additional women each day. We provide these women with harm reduction supplies, bus tickets, food hampers, hygiene products, clothing, snacks and meals, access to phone, and referrals to alternative resources.

We are currently providing case management to 106 women through the programs run out of the Warm Zone. This includes mobile harm reduction, housing referrals, ministry support, financial support, advocacy, goal planning, etc. We work alongside the women and provide support while they work towards achieving their self-identified goals.

Through the Warm Zone, we have also distributed community care packages filled with necessities such as toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, feminine hygiene products, etc. To date we have supplied 242 care packages to homeless individuals in the community during winter and extreme heat in the summer.

In December 2020 we enhanced the services offered at the shelter by providing an Outdoor Inhalation Overdose Prevention Site in the Warm Zone parking lot. This site operates in accordance with best practice guidelines (BCCDC Outdoor Inhalation guidelines and Fraser Health's Overdose Prevention manual) and has approval from our local health authority.

In February 2021, we further enhanced our services with a Capacity Extension shelter. This shelter mirrors the Warm Zone Shelter and has also been approved to remain open until March 2022. Despite the challenges with the pandemic our services have grown and we have been able to serve the most vulnerable women in Abbotsford/Mission Area.

Fronya



FRONYA THRIFT BOUTIQUE

A small social enterprise in Mission that supports community members, raises revenue for program delivery and provides job training for women.

In 2020-2021, Fronya donated \$854.00 in clothing to SARA for Women programs and \$572.00 in clothing to women living on the streets or shelters. Gift baskets were donated to Hospice for their gala event. This fiscal year, we gave away 230 coats, boots, runners, hats, mitts, and scarves to women in need. We continue to provide 20% discount on all merchandise to seniors every Monday. To engage with customers' fun Saturdays are celebrated in May and June for any item with a zipper, July and August any item with a button, a 20% discount is provided. In September and October a smile from customer qualifies for a 20% discount. Fronya struggled but remained open in the pandemic due to its dedicated set of staff and volunteers.



HUMAN RESOURCES HIGHLIGHTS

The year 2020-2021 taught us to remain focused, connected and engaged with SARA staff members and clients during the pandemic. Innovative actions listed below kept all motivated and smiling in difficult, stressful, and challenging times.

- + Regular staff check-ins with ED and managers through Zoom.
- + Providing an extra day off with pay every two weeks during the first wave helped all staff to rest and recuperate.
- + Pandemic pay amounting to \$61,720.32 was paid to eligible provincial staff from March 15, 2020 to July 04, 2020.
- + Additionally, pandemic pay to staff in federally funded programs was self-funded by SARA.
- + Administrative, management, counselling, outreach, and support staff were largely able to work from home to provide continuity in service to clients and employees.

Our role in the community was never compromised and internal deliveries never stopped.

- + Diversity, and Inclusive Committee formed. They tirelessly worked to get the SARA desk calendar 2021 published and circulated to all staff, volunteers and Board members.

- + CSSEA hiring best practices were followed, and a total of 34 new employees were hired in the fiscal year 2020-2021.
- + Work in progress to redraft SARA Policy manual.
- + Payroll service providers evaluated to create one platform for Employee payroll, Benefits, and Human Resource Information systems.
- + Angela Marie MacDougall facilitated 16 hours of anti-racism and anti-oppression training to all SARA staff through Zoom in July 2020.
- + Skill development – nine hours of Strength Deployment Inventory training for Management was facilitated by Martha Sales, certified Executive Coach.
- + New positions were approved and hired; Admin Coordinator and Payroll/Finance Clerk.
- + Talent Matrix:

Year	Full Time	Part Time	Casual	Total
2019 - 2020	27	6	44	77
2020 - 2021	37	9	51	97



S.A.R.A.



Pre-Mask Mandate

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS (FOR FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021)

The COVID pandemic caused many operational challenges and we responded with new procedures and collaborative approaches. Some key accomplishments throughout the year were:

Implementation of safety protocols

At the beginning of the pandemic there was a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies for all agencies. We were able to equip each site with a PPE station, first aid station and a janitorial supply program. All sites are now visited once a month and inventories are checked and replenished on site at the time of visit. The implementation of this program also meant that all PPE, first aid and janitorial supplies are being purchased in one place at a significantly lower cost than purchasing from numerous suppliers.

Renegotiation of copier leases

Our office copier leases were due to expire this past year. We were able to consolidate the leases, three in total, into one comprehensive lease and reduce the overall payment by \$300 per month for an annual savings of \$3,600 per year.

Renegotiation of cell phone contract

Ensuring our staff were well equipped to deal with clients remotely during the pandemic also became a priority, which meant we had to add a number of new cell phones to our existing contract. Our new contract will save SARA \$320 a month for an annual savings of \$3,840.

Grant Applications

SARA was successful in several of its grant applications resulting in over \$300,000 being awarded for various uses such as additional staffing and additional resources for clients. It is because of this success that SARA was able to give its employees additional much-needed time off during the pandemic.

Donations

Donations continue to increase through the changes made to the SARA website, as well as community engagement and awareness. For the year donations were up 44%.



Food donation

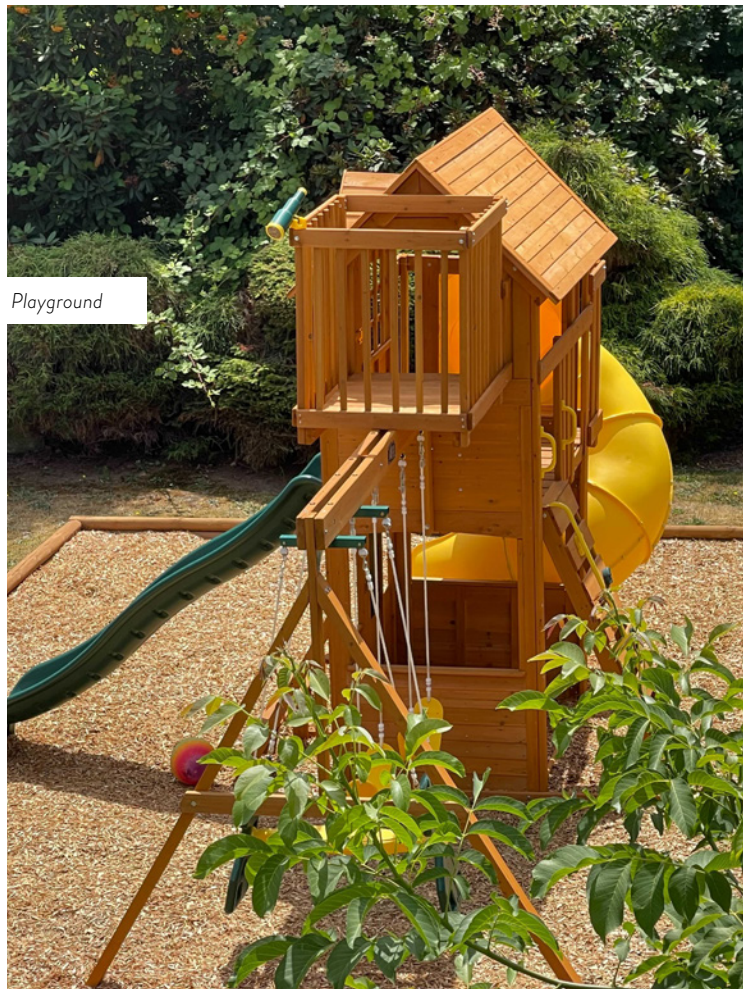


Provincial Government visit to Fronya

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 people of all gender identities and ages committed their time, energy and money, and made it possible for SARA for Women to deliver programs and services throughout Abbotsford and Mission.



Playground

SARA STANDS IN GRIEF AND SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACROSS CANADA.

In May 2021 Canadians learned of the discovery of unmarked graves containing 215 children killed while forcibly held at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Since then other graves have been identified in BC and elsewhere in Canada and efforts are underway to find and return all Indigenous children stolen from their families and their communities. Though the discovery of specific mass graves and their locations was news, the knowledge that thousands of Indigenous children never returned from residential schools, and are still unaccounted for, is not. From 1831 to 1997 over 150,000 children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in a boarding school system purposefully designed to eradicate Indigenous culture, language, and religion using violent and abusive means. This sparked years of trauma and grief on the part of these children, their families, and their communities. This is only one example of the systemic, and often violent, racism that has been faced by Indigenous peoples throughout Canadian history.

SARA stands in grief and solidarity with Indigenous Peoples across Canada as they face the trauma caused by the church and the Canadian government through residential schools, and many other forms of systemic and ongoing racism. SARA acknowledges the impacts that colonialism, systemic racism, and violence have on members of our communities. SARA recognize that the non-profit sector and non-profit organizations are not free of racism, and we pledge to be active participants in decolonization and reconciliation.



RACISM, RECONCILIATION AND SARA COMMITMENT

The past year brought a number of important issues into stark relief and we at SARA were impacted as well as so many in our communities. Like many of you we are spending time in conversation, reflection and education on the big issues of racism, oppression, colonialism, and reconciliation.

As an organization founded on the values of feminism, integrity and trust, respect, dignity, and compassion, and leadership SARA cannot and will not shy away from shining a light on the dark corners of our attitudes, practices, and behaviours. SARA is committed to being an ally to all who are oppressed, to provide safe spaces of refuge and security, and to learning how we can reform racist and oppressive policies, practices, and attitudes.

In June 2020, SARA's Board of Directors developed an anti-racism statement that serves as a starting place for the ongoing work of becoming anti-racist. In July 2020 all SARA staff participated in a multi-day workshop on racism and oppression and from that experience staff and management formed a Diversity committee that meets regularly and works to educate themselves and others on matters related to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. And SARA is engaging with Reconciliation Canada to bring in-service trainings to all SARA staff about the impacts of residential schools and how we can be partners in the everyday journey of reconciliation.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values 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 strive for diversity and inclusion
- + We seek to understand
- + We recognize and challenge biases

Leadership

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



FACEBOOK: /SARAFORWOMEN.CA | TWITTER @SARAFORWOMEN | INSTAGRAM @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:



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FOR WOMEN

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