



# ANNUAL REPORT

**2021/22**

**SARA**  
FOR WOMEN

# CONTENTS

- A Message from the Board Chair . . . . . 3
- Board of Directors . . . . . 3
- A Message from the Executive Director . . . 5
- Statement of Financial Position . . . . . 6
- Housing & Shelter . . . . . 8
  - Transition Housing . . . . . 8
  - Second Stage Housing . . . . . 10
  - Shelter . . . . . 11
    - Warm Zone & Penny's Place . . . . . 11
- Outreach Programs . . . . . 12
  - Multicultural Outreach . . . . . 12
  - Harm Reduction & Overdose Prevention Sites Program . . . . . 13
  - HIV . . . . . 14
  - Pregnancy Outreach Program . . . . . 15
- Counselling . . . . . 16
  - Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling, and Empowerment (PEACE) . . 16
  - Stop the Violence (STV) . . . . . 16
- Community Pages . . . . . 18

**We acknowledge that we gather and work on the traditional, ancestral, unceded and shared territories of the STÓ:LŌ people, particularly the Semà:th, Kwantlen, Sq'ewlets, Màthxwi and Xwchiyò:m first nations.**

**We acknowledge our traditional hosts and thank them for their graciousness in allowing us to carry out this work on their lands.**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Linda Klippenstein**

**Corinne Molnar**  
*Board Vice-Chair and  
Executive committee Chair*

**Kanta Naik**

**Marlene Patterson**  
*Finance committee Chair*

**Grace Saris**  
*Board Chair*

**Andrea Senft**

**Liane Teubert**

**Colleen Walker**  
*Governance committee Chair*

After a year of significant challenge for all, I welcome this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to our volunteer Board members, employees, funders, stakeholders and Community partners. This past year, has brought opportunities and challenges to define who we are and what we value at SARA.

The year started amidst the cloud of COVID-19 pandemic, an unwelcome reminder of just how much physical and mental health matters for individuals and our communities.

Our goal was not only to weather the storm but energize our organization and continue building for the future. Sara's employees worked hard to support our clients in a safe, ever-changing environment creating positive impact. With each opportunity, the SARA Team has risen to assist our clients to access supportive programs and services which promote women's efforts to achieve domestic and social equality. At SARA, we are committed to being an ally to those women and children that are oppressed and need safe refuge to live free from violence. We remain committed in our resolve to being a catalyst for change, to lead, to respond, to support, to educate and to advocate for safer and healthier communities.

Our foundational pillars will continue to strengthen through purposeful and prudent strategies lead by operational efficiencies and strategic leadership capabilities.

Similarly, diversity and inclusion, reflection and education will remain a priority within our Board and our workforce. We look forward to more opportunities for growth and change lead by our new Executive Director, Michelle Puffer.

We are an organization founded on the values of feminism, integrity and trust, dignity and compassion, respect and leadership. Cheers to you and to the moments of inspiration and togetherness we share to support and empower women to realize their unlimited potential and live free from violence!

A heartfelt thank you to the SARA Board of Directors for your guidance and support.

Sincerely,

**Grace Saris, Board Chair**



# WHO IS SARA?

## **SARA FOR WOMEN: SUPPORT, ACCEPTANCE, RESOURCES, ACTION**

We are a feminist non-profit society providing safe refuge and community-based resources for women in the Fraser Valley. We promote and support women's efforts to achieve domestic, political, and social equality.

## **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.



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There have been many changes with SARA for Women and since the last Annual General Report was released. Most significantly, SARA has seen a change in leadership as Jennifer Breakspear departed in April of this year. Jennifer led SARA for Women with heart and a passion to ensure that women from all socioeconomic backgrounds are safe and able access the resources they need. We wish her all the best in her new journey, where we know she will continue to fight for the vulnerable and marginalized in our communities.

The world has seen landmark decisions that set women's rights back and uprisings where women are fighting for their freedoms. Women's voices need to be heard. We need to be strong together, for those who have no voice. SARA for Women continues to promote and support women's efforts to achieve domestic, political, and social equality. These efforts do not come without change, however. Sometimes things changing means making hard decisions to create space for something better.

As we look forward to the coming year, SARA is dedicated to find new ways to continue to support all women. We are shifting our focus to include the entire Fraser Valley and are looking at positive partnerships where we can grow our assistance and expand our reach, so that no woman goes unseen.

SARA for Women has a dedicated and responsive team that has a heart to serve our communities. They are supported by a Board of Directors who are passionate and truly care. As we look to the next year we have a number of exciting projects coming up and remain committed to providing the best service we can, on behalf of our funders, in all the areas under our purview. I am thankful to be part of an organization that believes in their mission to support and empower women to realize their unlimited potential and to live free from violence.

**Michelle Puffer, SPHRi**  
*Executive Director*

# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31	2022	2021
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 2,385,171	\$ 2,352,304
Accounts receivable	122,245	159,107
Goods and services tax receivable	16,897	4,968
Prepaid expenses and deposits	23,824	22,131
<b>Capital Assets</b>	<b>2,548,137</b>	<b>2,035,837</b>
	<b>986,566</b>	<b>995,229</b>
	<b>\$ 3,534,703</b>	<b>\$ 3,502,355</b>





March 31	2022	2021
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 260,695	\$ 88,527
Wages payable	52,736	43,514
Vacation payable	117,560	86,389
Deferred revenue and grants	1,082,712	1,217,109
Security deposits	11,865	14,460
Current portion of long term debt	11,865	10,381
	<b>1,536,336</b>	<b>1,460,380</b>
<b>Long term debt</b>	<b>248,246</b>	<b>259,013</b>
<b>Deferred capital contributions</b>	<b>207,298</b>	<b>208,695</b>
<b>Replacement reserves</b>	<b>312,459</b>	<b>277,031</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,304,339</b>	<b>2,205,119</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		
Invested in capital assets	520,254	503,607
Internally restricted	1,023,306	1,037,609
Unrestricted	(313,196)	(243,980)
	<b>1,230,364</b>	<b>1,297,236</b>
	<b>\$ 3,534,703</b>	<b>\$ 3,502,355</b>

# HOUSING & SHELTER

## ABBOTSFORD TRANSITION HOUSE

940

calls/referrals

30

intakes (women)

27

intakes (children)

910

refusals

25

move outs

## MISSION TRANSITION HOUSE

734

calls/referrals

39

intakes (women)

39

intakes (children)

636

refusals

37

move outs

## TRANSITION HOUSING

We have all been through a lot this year! Historic heat domes, new more contagious variants of COVID-19, and atmospheric rivers created complexities that have never been seen. Management and staff worked hard and react quickly to each challenge to mitigate the effects of these unprecedented events and the impact on the women we serve.

Summer 2021 brought dangerous record temperatures of well over 40 degrees. Abbotsford Transition House was already well situated with central air conditioning and we quickly got approval for central air conditioning for the Mission Transition House. At the same time poor air quality due to forest fires was combatted by air filtration systems already in place within the transition houses.

The rise of new more contagious variants of COVID-19 became problematic in late 2021 and for the first time we were faced with client outbreaks and staffing challenges as staff began contracting COVID-19 from community transmission. Management and staff worked diligently and implemented even stricter



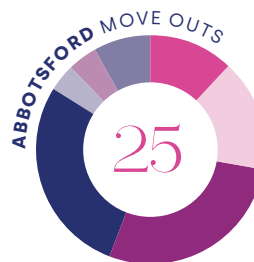


protocol with the assistance of Fraser Health and we were able to restrict further spread between the programs.

At the same time as COVID-19 ramped up we were faced with atmospheric rivers that flooded the valley and created landslides that cut our community off from Chilliwack and beyond. A number of our staff were personally impacted by the flooding and staffing became a significant challenge as people were cut off from coming to work by road closures. Once again management and staff pulled together to keep things running so that there was minimal impact to our services.

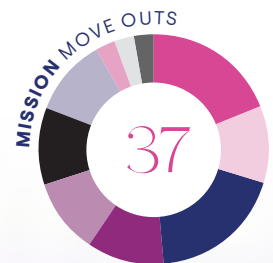
Our successes in transition house during this fiscal year were clearly the result of the tenacity, resilience of the management and staff of SARA for Women, and the shared commitment and importance of maintaining services to women and in very challenging times!

## MOVEOUT BREAKDOWNS



- ▶ 3 to other transition houses
- ▶ 4 to private housing with subsidy
- ▶ 7 to live with family or friends
- ▶ 7 to second stage housing
- ▶ 1 to an affordable housing unit
- ▶ 1 safe to return home
- ▶ 2 unknown

- ▶ 7 to other transition houses
- ▶ 4 to private housing with subsidy
- ▶ 7 to private housing without subsidy
- ▶ 4 to live with family or friends
- ▶ 4 safe to return home
- ▶ 4 returned to abusive situation
- ▶ 4 to emergency shelter
- ▶ 1 to alcohol and drug recovery service
- ▶ 1 to youth housing
- ▶ 1 chose to remain homeless





Christine lamb supported me in many aspects of my stay there. They helped me get back on my feet, starting over with nothing. The staff went above and beyond to help me in any way they could. And I could talk to them about anything. They helped me to get everything to fill my home at Christine lamb, by means of donations. Also helping me get furniture for my new place after I moved. I still keep in contact with the staff that were there when I lived there. I am eternally grateful for Christine lamb and can't thank them enough."

— PAST RESIDENT

## SECOND STAGE HOUSING

55

women housed  
at Christine Lamb  
Residence

65

children housed  
at Christine Lamb  
Residence

72

women housed  
at Santa Rosa

68

children housed  
at Santa Rosa

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

SARA currently has two short-term second stage housing programs to serve women in need of an affordable place to call home. These stays are generally for 18 months, but can be up to three years. There are a number of projects in the pipeline to increase the offerings of this type of housing as we have seen the need increase.

SHELTER

Warm Zone & Penny's Place

2,080

shelter guests  
at **Warm Zone**

2,237

shelter guests  
at **Penny's Place**

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

In 2022 the Warm Zone drop-in center continued to offer modified door and outreach services due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Warm Zone expanded its five-bed capacity extension shelter to eight beds during extreme weather and onwards. Women were able to access services 24/7, including three meals a day, showers, laundry, harm reduction, advocacy, resources, and a safe place to stay. In addition to this, door services were provided to 4380 women.

4,380

women were provided with door service  
at the **Warm Zone**

1,320

**food hampers/  
care packages** given  
out at door

4,000

**bus tickets** were  
provided to meet  
transportation needs

3,150

times food program  
was accessed at  
Warm Zone

1,042

meals served at  
Penny's Place

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The Warm Zone door service provided women with food hampers, bus tickets, harm reduction, clothing, phone access, snacks and meals, hygiene products, and referrals to other services. We worked alongside women—meeting them where they were—to achieve their self-identified goals.

2,496

loads of laundry were  
done at Warm Zone

3,640

loads of laundry done  
at Penny's Place

1,982

times shower facilities  
were utilized (WZ)

1,249

times shower facilities  
were utilized (PP)

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The Warm Zone also provided community care packages during extreme weather (winter and summer), distributing 342 community care packages and 1320 packages at the door directly to homeless individuals and for other community members to distribute.

The WEAVE Program (ended on October 31, 2021) managed a caseload of 12 women actively trying to exit abuse, violence and exploitation.

The Outdoor Inhalation Overdose Prevention Site provides enhanced service to women seeking harm reduction and responding to overdoses. This site operates following best practice guidelines (BCCDC Outdoor Inhalation guidelines and Fraser Health's Overdose Prevention manual) and has approval from our local health authority.

# OUTREACH PROGRAMS

THE OUTREACH PROGRAM IN ABBOTSFORD AND MISSION SUPPORTED WOMEN, WOMEN WITH CHILDREN, RACIALIZED WOMEN, INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS, 2SLGBTQQIA+ PEOPLE, AND SURVIVORS WHO ARE TRYING TO EXIST AND DEAL WITH TRAUMA RELATED TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

## 2,445

women accessed services through SARA's Outreach Programs

## 730

women accessed housing services

## 575

women received legal support

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

In the last fiscal year, from April 2021 to March 2022, the Outreach Program provided services to two thousand four hundred forty-five women seeking support with emotional, financial, safe, affordable housing, legal, and food security resources.

Domestic Violence was recognized as "a Pandemic within the COVID-19 pandemic," and as soon as the restrictions began to lift, women who were isolated, trapped with their abusers, working from home, and staying home with children reached out. This resulted in a sharp increase in caseloads.

The lack of access to safe, affordable housing resulted in Outreach Program providing housing services to seven hundred and thirty women.

Five hundred and seventy-five women received legal support services.

The SARA Legal Booth, which consists of local lawyers, provided free legal advice to 55 women in person and over the phone.

## MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH

The Multicultural Outreach Program was busy helping, and continues to help, bridge language gaps in services for women with a second language. Women received support



with connections to government, mental health services, and medical COVID-19 support programs. The team also helped newcomers to the Canada connect with support systems available for women fleeing Intimate Partner Violence.

### **HARM REDUCTION & OVERDOSE PREVENTION SITES PROGRAM**

The delivery of services, Harm Reduction, OPS, and HIV support continued despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

SARA's Harm Reduction Worker carried out a variety of duties over the past fiscal year including oversight of harm reduction supplies to other programs in the Society and orientation and support of our a peer-to-peer team—helping them carry out their responsibilities within the harm reduction framework.

The program works with the public facilitating Community Harm Reduction training and needle recovery, and provides education and supplies while connects vulnerable community members experiencing homelessness to essential services.

The Harm Reduction Program and the OPS program have peers who worked four thousand four hundred and sixteen hours in the last fiscal

year. The peer program allows the women to build strength and gain a sense of confidence.

Our programs aimed to provide and enhance skills, knowledge, and resources, and to support clients' needs to live safely. This support benefits not only people who uses drugs, but also their families, and the community.

The Harm Reduction program distributed ten thousand four hundred and forty-two supplies in the Fraser Valley (Mission, Abbotsford, and Chilliwack). The program distributed forty-three thousand two hundred seventy-five sterile needles in the community, and two thousand four hundred and sixty-two needles were safely disposed. One thousand two hundred and forty-nine Naloxone kits were provided to clients for using safety.

**10,442**

supplies distributed in the Fraser Valley

**2,462**

needles safely disposed of

**1,249**

Naloxone kits provided to clients

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022



# 4,416

hours worked by Peers

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

## OPS PROGRAM

# 1,659

times our overdose prevention site was accessed

# 18

overdoses reversed

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS) program aimed to prevent drug overdoses and overdose deaths.

In the past fiscal year, the OPS site was utilized one thousand six hundred and fifty-nine times. The peers assisted with the on-site monitoring of people at risk of overdose and rapid response where necessary. The program was able to reverse eighteen overdoses in the last fiscal year.

## HIV PROGRAM

In the past fiscal year, the HIV program provided preventive services to 11 clients in the Fraser Valley (Mission, Abbotsford, Deroche, and Chilliwack) community.

The program aimed to provide clients with their status and link them to care.



**PREGNANCY OUTREACH PROGRAM (POPS)**

24

prenatal referrals.

27

mothers + babies added to program

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The Pregnancy Outreach Program (POPs) offers nursing care and outreach support for mothers and families prenatally and six months postpartum.

The SARA Nurse is available virtually or in person to serve the women and children up to age six. The program had a Practicum Student from the UFV Social Work program shadow the Outreach Worker for several months.

POPs is dedicated to providing services for women experiencing high-risk pregnancies, teens, women with drug or alcohol concerns, and women with low income. We offer prenatal classes, bi-weekly lunches (or food hampers distributed when lunches were not possible), group and one-on-one support, referrals to other community resources, and dietary and health information including food skills classes.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, there were 24 prenatal referrals. The year started with 31 postpartum mothers, and 27 mothers and babies were added to the program. Over the course of several months, food and supplies for hampers were purchased, assembled, and distributed to women and their children. An average of 26 women and 53 children benefited from the hampers.

Donations and monies received from grant applications continue to be an integral part of the work done in the program. The number of aboriginal women receiving service increased by 11% and new immigrants by 15% over the previous year.

↑11%

increase in Indigenous service recipients

↑15%

increase in immigrants receiving services

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

POPs staff continue to interact with and develop partnerships with community resources resulting in greater opportunities for women receiving services. POPs anticipates several new initiatives starting in fall 2022.

# COUNSELLING

## PREVENTION, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, COUNSELLING, AND EMPOWERMENT (PEACE)

448

clients received...

478

hours of individual  
or group services

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The PEACE Program provides free, confidential counselling for children and youth (ages 4–18) who have witnessed and or experienced abuse, threats, violence in the home, or other relationship violence.

The program offers safety skills and strategies and supports children to understand they are not at fault for the abusive actions of others. Using a variety of tools, counsellors help children label feelings they have experienced as a result of abuse witnessed and or experienced and understand healthy ways of dealing with and expressing emotions.

A caregivers 8-week group was offered by zoom with four women regularly attending. Positive feedback about the group encouraged the counsellors to anticipate rerunning the group.

Both counsellors are expecting running groups for children and youth in the fall.

The PEACE Program has been fully staffed and stable this year, and a practicum student from the UFV Social Work program was able to shadow the counsellors.







## STOPPING THE VIOLENCE (STV)

651

women received...

1261+46

hours of individual  
or group services

APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

The Stopping the Violence program provides free individual and group counselling for women who currently experience or have previously experienced intimate partner violence. Many participants have also experienced childhood trauma and abuse.

Through their work with qualified counselling staff, women learn to recognize and understand the dynamics and impacts of abuse. Safety plans may be developed, and women learn new coping strategies and assertiveness skills. Self-confidence and self-worth are strengthened.

The When Love Hurts group started in September 2021, and we were able to run two ten-week sessions by Zoom with five to ten women per group.

Despite technical challenges and a lack of daycare for mothers at home with small children, women appreciated being together

on Zoom and felt supported by each other and the group facilitator. We anticipate running the group in person in September 2022.

Counselling continues to be offered in person and by phone or zoom. Despite the challenges of telehealth, women have reported feeling grateful they had access to counselling during the pandemic.

The waitlist continues to grow, indicating the severity of intimate partner violence in our communities.

“

A couple of clients have gone to vocational school to seek better employment opportunities.

They have reported feeling a renewed sense of confidence and hope for their future.

These significant changes have been attributed to feeling more supported through counselling. They feel they are now able to move forward in their healing journey. Through long term trauma support they have a better understanding of their complex mental health needs. STV counselling has helped them progress to a stronger, healthier place in their lives.”

—STV COUNSELLOR

# SARA IN THE COMMUNITY



▲ Heritage Park Middle school information session



▲ International Women's Day Event

Khalsa Aid donation ▶





Purple Light Nights Event ▲



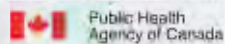
Overdose Awareness Day ▲

OPS ▶



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:



### OUR MISSION

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

### OUR VISION

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

**SARA**  
FOR WOMEN

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