



POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK
ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

Positive Women's Network challenges HIV and changes women's lives.

A community living with and affected by HIV, we provide leadership, support and education on HIV-related health, social and prevention initiatives for women.

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Cover photo: Loon Lake retreat by Sangam.



Positive Women's Network

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Loon Lake retreat. Photo by Sangam.

REPORT FROM
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The strength of Positive Women's Network is realized through the combined work of women at all levels of the organization.

The Board of Directors takes the lead on establishing the long-term stability of PWN through financial management, strategic planning, policy review and development, governance, and fundraising.

This year the board managed a strong financial performance, reaching the 2014-15 year-end in a solid financial position with a small surplus.

We participated in three fundraising events: the AIDS Walk for Life, a pub night, and a Beyoncé-themed art show. Funds received went to PWN's Poverty Relief Fund, which assists PWN members in various ways including affordable housing, food, and childcare subsidies.

We are entering a year of transition, as Executive Director Marcie Summers will be retiring at the end of 2015. Given that Marcie has led the organization for over 20 years, we know this will be huge change for the organization and the community.

For over a year, our transition committee, consisting of board, staff, and community members, has been implementing PWN's succession plan. The committee has the unique ability to recognize the important qualities needed for the new Executive Director to maintain PWN's success and meet the needs, challenges, and opportunities of the future.

The board believes that the committee's expertise will ensure the right Executive Director will be hired to guide the organizations through this exciting period of change.

Board recruitment is always on our minds, and this year we welcomed three new board members. The board has worked

diligently to ensure that more HIV-positive women are able to join, but at times this has been challenging.

To address this we have created subcommittees to undertake specific tasks (e.g., transition, fundraising) and have invited PWN members to join. We believe that this more flexible format will allow more women to become involved in the board's work.

We have made great progress on our strategic plan (2013–2016), whose goal is to expand PWN's mandate to include communicable diseases, such as hepatitis C, while still providing the quality of services for which the organization is known. A key priority for the coming year will be updating the existing plan to reflect the current and anticipated needs of PWN.

We look forward to the coming year's changes with optimism, hope, and boundless energy. The board would like to sincerely thank Marcie for her dedication and vision, and wish her well in her next adventure.

Thank you to all board and staff members for their time and energy working to make our goals a reality: *Challenging HIV. Changing women's lives.*

On behalf of the Board of Directors,



Brittany Graham
BOARD CHAIR

REPORT FROM
THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I was reflecting on my upcoming retirement, four words came to mind.

The first was RESPECT—a value and a guiding principle in all we do. Respect for our members, for their voices, for their lived realities, for their dignity. Respect for each other on our staff and volunteer teams, respect for divergent opinions and perspectives, and respect and acknowledgement of the passion we bring to our work. Respect for our community partners, locally, regionally, and nationally. Respect for the HIV movement locally and globally. Respect for human rights.

The second was COMMUNITY. PWN is a safe community, a sanctuary where women can meet other women, get respite from their lives' stresses, learn about HIV, and share commonalities. Across this country we are part of a larger community of activists, people living with HIV, researchers, health care professionals, people committed to supporting people living with HIV and preventing more infections, and, most importantly, a community of people committed to social justice.

TENACIOUS certainly came to mind. We have had many challenges over the years: inadequate funding, indifferent and at times hostile political climates, discriminatory practices and policies, a complacent public. But we have carried on, just as our members carry on in the face of unfathomable stigma, stereotyping, and injustices.

And, of course, RESILIENCE. Over many years I have witnessed the resilience of PWN members in the face of so many challenges. It is, at times, hard to even imagine or understand. And it is so inspiring. In the drop-in, at retreats, in our programs, over the phone, what we witness is humour, compassion for others, determination. What we see are survivors. What we see are vibrant, alive women.

When I was hired in 1993, I was the only staff member in a small office in a building shared with AIDS Vancouver and what was then BC People With AIDS. PWN had 20 members, and I had to rent a computer to write the first grants.

We've come a long way. As a woman, as an advocate, as an activist, I am incredibly proud to have been part of the PWN story. Thank you to our members, staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and community allies.

Marcie Summers

Marcie Summers
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM

Health promotion is a community effort at Positive Women's Network.

We deliver education in person around the province, as well as via websites and social media, which reaches an even larger audience. Original print materials are distributed locally and nationally through our partnership with CATIE. Our united goal is to deliver comprehensive education about HIV and sexual health in women's lives. This year has been a great one for community efforts.

Women's lived experiences are central to our work, and sharing stories is important for members and communities to understand women's challenges and successes. One member shared a powerful story on addiction and recovery in our *Positive Side* newsletter. She said the process of being interviewed and reflecting on her progress was an important step in her moving forward.

Another member's story on disclosure that was shared in the newsletter became the subject of a short documentary film. Filmmaker Joella Cabalu won first prize at the Play it Forward competition, sponsored by Cineworks, for *Leap of Faith*. Featuring Heidi, the movie helped viewers become aware of HIV's effect on women.

Disclosure is a significant issue in all positive women's lives, and we've done a lot of work in this area recently. In partnership with Oak Tree Clinic, we drafted a five-part series on disclosure issues for women. It's forthcoming in several languages and will be distributed nationally in partnership with CATIE.

In partnership with CATIE, our health educator Sangam provided workshops in different regions of BC, including the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley, the Okanagan, Vancouver Island, and the Kootenays. She consulted with each region on their needs to optimize services across BC. Her trips included health education and intensive support for women with HIV and social service and health workers.

Our annual SpringBoard conference featured sessions on violence against women, trans women's health, and sex work and the law. Last fall, we partnered with Women Against Violence Against Women and Options for Sexual Health BC on Hoopla, a women's health fair. There was community networking and presentations on e-health records, youth

YOU SHOULD KNOW

270



Number of
Facebook likes

2,170



Number of
Twitter followers

sexual health, women's resistance to violence, HIV and aging, and cyber misogyny.

Our websites (pwn.bc.ca and YouShouldKnow.ca) provide important health information. PWN covers HIV diagnosis, care, research, and determinants of health. You Should Know looks at women's sexual health and aging, sexually transmitted infections, family and community support for sex education, and social factors in health.

POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK

792



Number of
Facebook likes

5,483



Number of
Twitter followers

We continue to be very active on social media to build a strong Canadian women-centred response to HIV. We are pleased to be a strong voice in improving the lives and outcomes for women living with HIV and women at risk. Thanks to our many collaborators near and far.

Janet Madsen

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



Heidi and Joella after Leap of Faith won the Play It Forward competition.

.....
TAKING THIS LEAP HAS BEEN SCARY AT TIMES **BUT I FELT I WAS READY.**

IT HAS BEEN WELL WORTH ALL THE REWARDS.

.....
– Heidi

SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Support Program is based on connection, respect, and adaptability.

As a team, we constantly work at offering different and unique ways to reach out to women, and provide opportunities for women to connect with peers. Given that the PWN membership is a hugely diverse group of women living with HIV from all over BC, services are provided over the phone, via e-mail, and in person, to individuals and to groups.

In June, we held a Wellness Retreat, where a dynamic and energetic group of 24 women explored self-care, attended educational workshops, and made new peer connections. Of the members attending, one-third had not been to a PWN retreat before and nearly half lived outside the Lower Mainland. As one member poignantly stated, *“I have been living with HIV for 15 years and I have never been open to others, except doctors and nurses. This was my first time meeting anyone else who has HIV. I met so many powerful brave amazing women.”*

Staff facilitated Peer Support Training for members in Victoria, and Peer Support Training Level 2 for members

in Vancouver. We recognize the value of providing this training, supporting women in their personal growth, and fostering peer connections and informal support networks throughout BC. Participant feedback demonstrates how the training serves as a catalyst for personal transformation, a healing journey, and a refocusing on personal needs. A critical element is the creation of a safe, confidential space in which women feel open and comfortable to share and learn. One graduate claimed that, because of the training, she felt motivated to take charge of her life, focus on her wellness, and re-engage with the HIV community.

We recognize the importance of continuing to reach out to isolated women living with HIV who are dealing with multiple barriers in accessing services. Provincial outreach allows PWN to visit partner ASOs across BC, providing information to frontline staff and support to members in those regions. This is a valuable extension of our Vancouver-based site. Strengthening our ties in the communities of the Fraser

Health Authority is another key outreach component.

Maintaining partnerships is crucial, and we value our work with diverse community-based organizations, including AIDS Vancouver, the Pacific AIDS Network, WAVAW, Oak Tree Clinic, McLaren Housing, and Positive Living BC, ensuring women have access to a variety of support and programs.

We had the opportunity to evaluate several parts of our Support Program. Outside evaluators reviewed Peer Support Training Levels 1 and 2, as well as outreach activities. Evaluation allows us to look critically at our programs and make positive changes based on recommendations.

We also had opportunities to provide education and information, including presenting best practices, at conferences (including CAHR), as well as offer practicum opportunities for professionals-in-training.

I would like to acknowledge the passionate and dedicated work of our Support Workers—Melissa, Sangam, and Valerie. (All the best to Val who retired this year!)

**I AM NOT
A DISEASE
BECAUSE I HAVE HIV.**

**I AM A STRONG
BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN**

**WITH A STORY OF
ENCOURAGEMENT TO TELL.**

– PWN member



Bronwyn Barrett
SUPPORT PROGRAM COORDINATOR

HAPPY RETIREMENT, VAL!

As an outreach support worker, Valerie Van Cleef connected with many women over the years. She worked hard (and for a long time) to set up a peer education and support program at the Fraser Valley Institution for Women. She also worked one-on-one with members in need of outreach, support with doctor's visits, housing challenges, and much more.



Upon Val's retirement, PWN had the outreach support program evaluated. It was found that "the outcomes of providing support expand beyond providing specific services to creating environments in which PWN members can experience transformative connections which create stability, security, and environments in which the women can become empowered and more independent."

In the evaluation, women spoke about how connecting with Val had affected their lives. Whether they needed support with food delivery, health care appointments, court cases and other disputes, or transportation to or from events, the underlying thread was the connection that the outreach support worker made with each woman.

Women indicated they relied on and trusted the outreach support worker, who helped provide stability and create a channel through which the women could talk, be validated, and feel empowered.

RECENTLY I WAS SAD.

SHE CAME AND
**DELIVERED
MY FOOD.**

**I DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT I WOULD DO.**

SHE GAVE ME
A REASON
IN A TIME I DIDN'T HAVE ONE.

– PWN member

WHO WE ARE

STAFF

Marcie Summers, Executive Director
 Donna Tennant, Director of Development
 Nancy Hoo, Bookkeeper
 Aretha Munro & Monique Desroches, Administrative Coordinators
 Bronwyn Barrett, Support Program Coordinator
 Sangam, Support Worker and Educator
 Melissa Medjuck, Support Worker and Retreat Coordinator
 Janet Madsen, Communications Coordinator
 Erin Seatter, Resource Coordinator

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kerry Campbell	Negar Hooshmand-Mozaffar
Carly Daoust	Virginia Le
Shivinder Dhillon	Bethany Schmidt
Mary Formby	Emily Turnbull
Brittany Graham	Amanda Valentine
Healthier Holroyd	

VOLUNTEERS

UBC BSW practicum students: Ruby Bisette & Kelsey Haeberle
 Support Program volunteers: Angel, Corrine, Lyanna, and Lora
 Leap of Faith video team: Joella Cabalu, Angelina Cantada,
 Claire Inglis, Heidi, and Carrie
 Beauty Night Society
 Complementary health volunteers

APPRECIATION

Our programs are supported by the generosity of many individuals and institutions. Thanks to all who have supported the work of Positive Women's Network.

Abbvie • BC Centre for Excellence • BC Gaming • Cineworks' Play It Forward • Dr Dean Wershler Inc (special thanks to Sheila) • Lush Fresh Handmade Natural Cosmetics (Robson Street) • MAC AIDS Fund • Merck • Public Health Agency of Canada • Purdy's Chocolates • Provincial Health Services Authority of BC • RBC Foundation • Shooting Stars Foundation • Starbucks • Trigger & Girlgig Productions • Urban Fare (Yaletown) • Vancouver Foundation • Viiv Healthcare • Women Helping Women

FINANCIALS

	2015	2014
ASSETS		
Cash	\$218,398	\$192,290
Term deposits	81,088	80,872
Accounts receivable	5,894	23,308
Prepaid expenses	11,707	17,946
	317,087	314,416
Capital assets	7,634	10,648
	324,721	325,064
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$50,769	\$60,098
Deferred revenue	110,141	111,111
Deferred gaming revenue	39,858	43,447
Deferred contributions related to capital assets	548	781
Total liabilities	201,316	215,437
NET ASSETS		
Invested in capital assets	7,086	9,867
Internally restricted	90,000	90,000
Unrestricted	26,319	9,760
Total net assets	123,405	109,627
	324,721	325,064
REVENUE		
Grants	\$708,291	\$726,841
Donations	68,867	48,229
Gaming	43,589	40,554
Other	26,660	10,807
Amortization of deferred contributions	233	333
	847,640	826,764
EXPENSES		
Wages, benefits and contractors	\$572,926	\$567,552
Programs	97,849	92,050
Rent	84,149	80,739
Office and other	52,401	60,897
Bookkeeping	11,996	11,996
Utilities	6,402	6,709
Professional fees	5,125	4,800
Amortization	3,014	4,242
	833,862	828,985
Excess of revenue (expenses) for the year	13,778	(2,221)

IT IS USEFUL TO
CONNECT
WITH OTHER
POSITIVE WOMEN.

THIS IS THE
ONLY TIME
I CAN BE
MYSELF.

– PWN member

**Challenging HIV.
Changing women's lives.**