



# The Positive Side

Positive Women's Network  
www.pwn.bc.ca

May/June 2004  
Volume 12 Number 3

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*River's Gulf Island house, a home made possible by the PWN Housing Subsidy Program.*

## HIV & Me

### at home in my treehouse

by River  
with Sheena Sargeant

**Several years ago,** I dreamt that I was in a park with many children.

The park was surrounded by a thick forest, but in the center of the park was a single tree with a giant treehouse.

As I watched the children playing, I noticed with alarm a long line of bears beginning to emerge from the forest. Panicked, I realised that I was the only adult in the park. I called to the children, gathering

them together as quickly as I could, and I hurried them up, up the treehouse. One after another, I lifted the children as high as I could and hid them in the treehouse.

Heaving with exhaustion, I lifted the last child to safety and looked around. There was no one to help me up into the treehouse, and I was too weak to climb up myself.

As the bears approached, with one last effort, I grabbed the lowest branch I could, wrapped

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## PWN Support Program Evaluation

pwn tests out a new appreciative inquiry approach to evaluation

by Kylie Hutchinson

Adapted and reprinted with permission

Earlier this season, PWN's support program undertook a new approach to evaluation, called Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciative Inquiry aims to identify and build upon what is working well in organizations. It is based on the belief that focusing on strengths is more effective than focusing on problems, and that positive images work to inspire future positive action. Since AI is normally used as an organizational development technique, the PWN Evaluation was designed as a participatory outcome evaluation that selectively used appreciative techniques for data collection.

The purpose of PWN's appreciative evaluation was to identify what is

working within the Support Program, what activities have had a positive impact on the members, and what strategies could possibly build upon these successes. Data collection occurred via two two-hour interactive AI sessions with PWN members and staff and four appreciative interviews with representatives of other ASOs.

PWN members confirmed that they do receive various types of emotional and practical support in a non-judgemental manner from the program. They also found the women-only drop-in to be a safe and confidential space where they can both obtain and provide peer support by connecting with other HIV+ women. The evaluation also indicated that the Support Program

Evaluation - continued on next page




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offers a different type of support for women living with HIV than that provided by the medical community and other ASOs. Peer ASOs appreciated PWN's exclusive focus on women, stating that this focus allows them to be more effective in their own work. It also serves as a reminder for them to consider the needs of women in their own services.

The major strengths of the Support Program included its women-only focus, peer networking opportunities, non-judgmental and holistic approach, child-friendly services, useful referrals and partnerships with other ASOs. Members in particular appreciated the annual PWN retreats. These strengths have contributed to the successful achievement of a large number of intended program outcomes for women living with HIV, including an increased ability to access support and counselling,

increased informal peer support networks, decreased social isolation, improved coping strategies, increased ability to become personal and/or peer advocates and improved overall health and spiritual well-being.

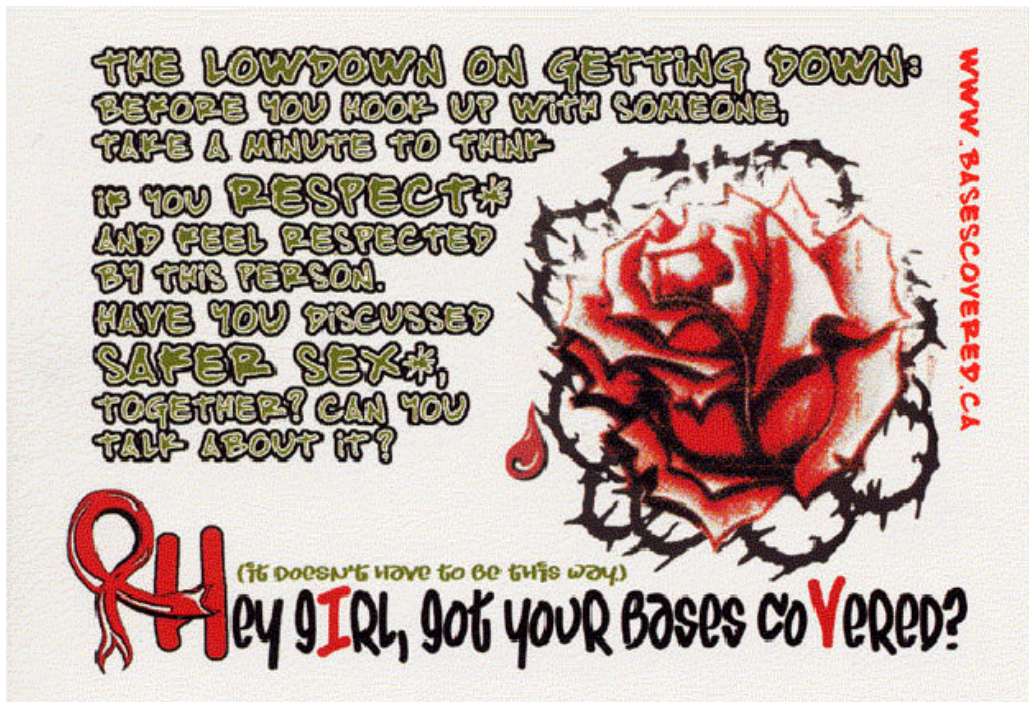
In order to provide even greater support to women living with HIV, the evaluation results recommended that PWN continue in its attempt to reach more isolated women living with HIV within and outside of the Lower Mainland. This may be achieved by modifying and augmenting its existing services, and by working in collaboration with other organizations to design alternatives that improve women's access to these services. It was also recommended that PWN expand upon its partnerships with other ASOs in order to collaboratively begin to address the significant unmet needs for women living with HIV, with housing being a priority. 

## **PWN Support Program Our Strengths and Positive Core**

- \* safe, women-only space
- \* emotional support for HIV+ women
- \* opportunities for informal connections, peer support, information-sharing
- \* child-friendly
- \* individual and client-focused approach
- \* member retreats
- \* useful referrals
- \* partnerships with other ASOs

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## Hey Girl, Got Your Bases CoVered?

pwn/youthco launch new young women's hiv prevention & awareness campaign

by Sheena Sargeant  
with Bronwen Tigar

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, YouthCO AIDS Society and PWN officially launched Bases Covered - the multi-media prevention campaign that you've been hearing bits and pieces about over the past year. Aimed at reducing HIV/AIDS infection rates among young women throughout the province, this campaign brings hard-hitting facts and images into the hands of young women through street cards, posters, a resource guide, video, workshops and a website.

"The need for this sort of campaign has never been greater," says Marcie Summers, Executive Director of PWN. "In 2002, young women between the ages of 15-29 accounted for almost half of new infections among women in Canada, and the issues affecting these

women are extremely complex. As a result, we've been tackling the challenge of creating resources that are subjective, meaningful and layered in their messaging."

Summers points to the targeted approach of each of the campaign materials. "We're being creative in our efforts to reach these youth. We've got information going out on street and club cards. We've got posters for relevant agencies, schools and youth centres. And we're currently working on developing an interactive website that young women can access and interact with from anywhere in the province," she concludes.


PWN and YouthCO have been working closely together over the past year to develop the project. Focus groups

Bases Covered - continued on next page

and consultations with young women both infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS have been held at community-based HIV/AIDS, Aboriginal and youth service organizations across BC. The result is a series of resources that are realistic, thought provoking and empowering. While each resource is individualized and targeted around a specific theme, they are tied together by the same message: *"It doesn't have to be this way. Hey girl, got your bases covered?"*

"Bases Covered provides young women with the opportunity to take a good, hard look at the underlying factors that put them at risk of HIV infection," says J. Evin Jones,

Executive Director of YouthCO. "We're dealing with issues like violence, coercion, substance use and self-esteem. These are difficult issues, but we're inviting dialogue in a way that's safe and real. We're using graphics, poetry, spoken word, animation, online games and activities, music. We're inviting young women to use their own language and creativity to explore the issues behind HIV/AIDS in their own lives," Jones concludes. "It's a process that has been truly inspiring."

**For further information or to order your campaign resources today, contact: Bronwen Tigar, Bases Covered Campaign Coordinator at 1.800.877.YOUTHCO.** 

### **Bases Covered Campaign Highlights:**

**Street Cards:** Series of five cards. The front of each card outlines a specific issue, and the back offers information on HIV/AIDS, harm reduction and safer sex strategies and/or problem solving and coping tools. Issues include: peer pressure, body image, coercion, and sexual decision-making. Cards are available now.

**Posters:** Series of five posters. Each poster deals with a specific issue affecting young women around HIV/AIDS, including: coercion/violence, substance use, self-esteem and love/trust. Posters are available now.

**Resource Guide:** Currently under development. Easy-to-read, comprehensive, pocket-sized booklet containing HIV/AIDS-related information, services and resources for young women throughout the Lower Mainland. Features young women's poetry, journal entries, artwork, graphic design and more. The Resource Guide will be launched Fall 2004.

**Workshop Series:** Currently under development. Peer developed and delivered interactive workshop series providing safer-sex, harm reduction and self-defence skills and information to young women. The workshops will be made available to youth service organizations and schools throughout the province in Fall 2004.

**Website:** Currently under development. Basescovered.ca will use the latest technology (including flash, web casts, video animation, interactive quizzes and more) in the creation of a virtual community for young women in which to share information and education around their sexual- and substance-related health needs. The first of its kind in Canada. The Website will be launched August 2004.



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my arms and legs around it, and hung on for dear life. A bear approached me and the treehouse. Terrified, I closed my eyes. Effortlessly, the bear reached up and placed a paw on my back.

And gently helped me into the treehouse.

\* \* \*

**I had been applying for housing subsidies for over five years when I received the news that I had won the PWN housing subsidy.**

*"I have learned along the way to be willing and to ease into the flow of life. Our path is always clear. The cloudy bits are us."*

I was both stunned and moved. I remember that feeling precisely. It takes a lot to sincerely move me, and I was so moved by this lovely, unexpected gift. I had been struggling to feel both healthy and happy in my old place, and this meant that I could finally take on certain things in my life that I had not been able to focus on before. To me, winning the housing subsidy signaled and enabled such an opportunity for me to finally concentrate on healing. It was fantastic.

And it was a portable subsidy! So I found a small home on one of the Gulf Islands. It was wonderful, full of life, sunshine and eagles. Eagles everywhere. You wouldn't believe it.

I lived there for over a year until I moved back to the city last August. I feel so fortunate to have had a chance to live here, too. I am moving soon though, and I will miss this place, I think. There was so much that I had wanted to do to this space, but I ran out of time and energy. Have you ever had a

little garden oasis in your life? I wanted to create one on my balcony here. No matter. I did what I

could and made this my home. I brought windows, sunlight, meditation, mountains and colour to my life in this apartment. Can you feel it?

\* \* \*

**I am a very private person.**

This characteristic has always provided me with the space I need to find my inner strength and wisdom, to be a river, to be River. I have had to work to overcome a lot of challenges in my life, but these challenges have always made me stronger, more grateful and able to hang in there. It's all a gift, every little bit of it, even if it doesn't look like a gift at the time.

\* \* \*

**My body and its physical abilities are changing daily now, and I am**



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## working on paying attention to this process.

It's actually been really informative. I am learning to let go of the small things my body did that I took for granted, like simply holding my coffee cup. Are you even aware when you pick up your cup and pass it over your lips or move it to another spot? I am completely aware now of all these so-called "mindless", physical movements.

*"It's all a gift, every little bit of it, even if it doesn't look like a gift at the time."*

I have learned along the way to be willing and to ease into the flow of life. Our path is always clear. The cloudy bits are us.

\* \* \*

## I first learned about HIV through my gay male friends, but HIV really touched my life when I lost my partner a number of years ago.

He was such a loving and beautiful man, and I was so fortunate to be with him for so long. We were in love for thirteen years, if you can believe it. We lost each other and found each other again. It was such an honour to be with him when he passed away.

The best reaction I ever received when I told someone that I was HIV-positive was from a good friend of


mine. She just looked at me and said, "Oh, honey, that sucks." Then she threw her arms around me and gave a big hug. I've known that woman since she was five. She still makes me laugh.

There aren't many friends that come by these days. I've called them and said, "It's time now. This is your chance." But many of them just can't handle it. I know that they have lots of fear about all this, and I know there's nothing wrong with that. It's a loving act of keeping themselves safe.

\* \* \*

## It's time for me to move now to a single room, with lots of people around who can help me with all the small stuff, like coffee cups.

I will miss living on my own. For so many years, all I wanted was to be alone with the Earth and the Universe. Thanks, truly, to PWN and its housing subsidy. For a few years I got that opportunity and it changed my life.

I am a bit apprehensive about living with so many other people around, but I am looking forward to continuing to work on myself as I learn through this, too. I really don't like other people telling me what to do. But if I have to get fiesty with people, I certainly still have the fire and words to do it. 

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## PWN Support Program Calendar may 2004

monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday
<b>3</b> <b>drop-in</b> <b>closed</b>	<b>4</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>5</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>6</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm tab sup- port group 6 pm	<b>7</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>10</b> <b>drop-in</b> <b>closed</b>	<b>11</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>12</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>13</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm tab sup- port group 6 pm	<b>14</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>17</b> <b>drop-in</b> <b>closed</b>	<b>18</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>19</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>20</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm <b>no tab</b> <b>support</b> <b>group</b>	<b>21</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>24</b> <b>pwn</b> <b>closed</b> <b>for</b> <b>holiday</b>	<b>25</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>26</b> <b>cheque</b> <b>issue</b> <b>pwn</b> <b>closed</b>	<b>27</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm <b>no tab</b> <b>support</b> <b>group</b>	<b>28</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>31</b> <b>drop-in</b> <b>closed</b>				

# PWN Support Program Calendar

## June 2004



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monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday
<b>30</b> drop-in closed	<b>1</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>2</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>3</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm no tab support group	<b>4</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>7</b> drop-in closed	<b>8</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>9</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>10</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm tab sup- port group 6 pm	<b>11</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>14</b> drop-in closed	<b>15</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>16</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm	<b>17</b> lunch 12 - 2 pm tab sup- port group 6 pm	<b>18</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30
<b>21</b> drop-in closed	<b>22</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>23</b> cheque issue pwn closed	<b>24</b> drop-in closed no tab support group	<b>25</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm
<b>28</b> drop-in closed	<b>29</b> hot lunch & food bank 12 - 2 pm	<b>30</b> drop-in open 11:30 am - 3:30 pm		

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## The PWN Board of Directors Needs You!

Are you interested in women's health?  
Are you committed to social justice?  
Do you enjoy working in a community of strong women?  
Are you thinking of volunteering?

Positive Women's Network is accepting applications for the  
Board of Directors.

We're looking for board members who are visionary, passionate,  
energetic, committed.

### The Process

For an information package, call **604.692.3000** or  
**1.866.692.3001**. If you are interested, submit an application,  
and the PWN Nominations Committee will set up an interview.  
Board candidates will be presented at the **PWN Annual General  
Meeting on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004**.

### The Commitment

Two-year term of service. Minimum of 3 hours/month, including  
attendance at monthly board meetings. Positive women, board  
members, volunteers and members of the community are also  
encouraged to submit names of those who may be interested in  
being a board member.

### Contact

**Marcie Summers, Executive Director**  
**604.692.3010 // 1.866.692.3001**  
**marcies@pwn.bc.ca**

PWN gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Provincial  
Health Services authority in the production of *The Positive Side*.

Production would not be possible without the involvement of all our  
contributors, the teamwork of the PWN staff, and, especially, the  
ongoing support and help of Lori Wilson and Vinita Chand.

Many thanks all-round.

*The Positive Side* is published six times a year. Editor: Sheena Sargeant  
Please address queries and/or submissions to:  
Editor, The Positive Side, Positive Women's Network,  
#614-1033 Davie St, Vancouver, BC, V6E 1M7, [pwn@pwn.bc.ca](mailto:pwn@pwn.bc.ca)

The deadline for the next issue is **June 17, 2004**.

## Hats off to ...

- \* **Capers** ... for our keeping our bellies warm with hot lunches!
- \* **Penny** ... for helping PWN organize lunch for our Victoria members. Thanks to Penny's efforts, over 10 women came and we all had a great time!
- \* **Cee Cee and Penny** ... for taking Bronwyn and Sangam on a tour of the HIV/AIDS services in Victoria. Friendly people, lots of information and great exercise!
- \* **M.A.C. AIDS Fund** ... for awarding us a generous grant to continue our work on the national phase of WAVE, which will assist us in reaching more positive women and service providers in Canada. MAC AIDS Fund also generously supported us with Phase I of WAVE.
- \* **The Shooting Stars Foundation** ... for generously donating money to both our Food Program and to our Housing Subsidy Program. By supporting these two programs, the Shooting Stars Foundation will have a direct impact on two of the most important aspects of HIV positive women's lives - food and shelter.



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## And the Diamond Tiara goes to ... vancity!

by Coreen Douglas




All of us at PWN want to thank VanCity for being there for us. Our partnership with VanCity is more than "financial institution to customer". VanCity takes its commitment to community seriously, including the community of women in BC infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.

VanCity has supported our Holiday Lunch since 2000, ensuring that PWN members have a hot turkey dinner, food vouchers and gifts.

VanCity sponsored our 2002 International Women's Day luncheon, which featured the wonderful Dr. Sue Burgess speaking about and showing the faces of women living bravely with HIV/AIDS in our city.

VanCity was there for us this past December 1<sup>st</sup>, World AIDS Day, too. We were fortunate to be able to use the inspiring 12<sup>th</sup> floor boardroom at VanCity Centre, overlooking False Creek, for the launch of our Women & AIDS Virtual Education program. What a day that was!

VanCity is a sponsor this year for our World AIDS Day 2004 event, on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to VanCity (and co-sponsor Abbott Laboratories), we will host an afternoon on Women & HIV/AIDS at the Wall Centre Hotel, followed by a World AIDS Day reception.

From all of us at Positive Women's Network - thank you VanCity! 



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## Community Connections hiv/aids resources, events and opportunities

### 21st annual aids candlelight memorial & vigil

The Vancouver observance of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial & Vigil will be held Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 PM in Alexandra Park (at Beach & Bidwell) in Vancouver's West End.

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial & Vigil is the world's largest grassroots AIDS event. Its purpose is not only to remember and honour people with HIV/AIDS who have died, but is also a solemn public demonstration of solidarity with people living with HIV/AIDS.

Five people from the community speak of their personal experiences in dealing with the AIDS pandemic. Interspersed with the five speakers are four readers, each from front line organizations in the fight against AIDS and HIV. These people read the names of those who have died since the previous year's memorial.

The names of all those who lived with HIV and have died in the Vancouver area are posted on the bandstand during the event. Halfway through the ceremony a single candle is lit and its flame passed through the crowd. A guided meditation and the singing of a song for healing complete the event.

For further information, or to leave names and dates to be posted on the bandstand during this year's event, please call (604) 254-4666, or see [www.aidsvigil.ca](http://www.aidsvigil.ca).

### calling all artists ...

and poets ... and writers ... and storytellers ... and photographers!

**Bases Covered is looking for creative submissions for its  
Young Women's Resource Guide.**

Send us any and all of your tips, ideas or stories related to HIV/AIDS, sexual health and harm reduction! Topics may include:

\* birth control \* periods \* sexuality \* gender \* sex \* condoms \* violence \* abuse \* self-defense \* street tips \* coercion \* pregnancy \* HIV/AIDS \* street drugs \* alcohol \* harm reduction \* getting tested \* finding a good doctor \* self-esteem \* body image \*

Honouraria will be available for contributors.

**For more information or to discuss a submission idea, contact  
Bronwen: 604.688.1441 or 1.800.YOUTHCO or  
[bronwent@youthco.org](mailto:bronwent@youthco.org)**



# PWN Support Program Events

## may/june 2004

### **bases covered focus group**

**@ pwn**

**may 3, 2004, 2 pm**

Be a part of the process of developing HIV prevention messages specifically by and for young Aboriginal women.  
Call Bronwen Tigar at 604.688.1441 for more information.

### **pwn retreat @ bowen island**

**may 15 - may 17, 2004**

Ahhhh ...  
Reeee-laxxxx ...  
Reeee-treeeeat ...

### **aids candlelight vigil @ alexandra park**

**may 30, 2004, 8 pm**

Celebrate the 21st Annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial & Vigil.  
Candles will be provided.

### **pwn agm @ pwn, room 103**

**june 28, 2004, 6 pm**

Find out what we've all been up to this past year.  
Run. Vote. Eat cake.  
It only happens once a year.

### **taking a break support group thursdays, 6 pm**

See the program calendar for upcoming dates.

Call Sangam at 604.692.3006 for info.

### **drop-in tuesdays - fridays, 11:30 am - 3:30 pm**

Closed May 26 and June 23 (cheque issue days).

### **pwn grocery tuesdays, 12:00 - 2:30 pm**

There is no pick up on any other day.

### **lunch tuesdays and thursdays, 12:00 - 2:00 pm**

Hot lunches Tuesdays,  
cold lunches Thursdays ... mmmm.  
Enough said.

### **computer help thursdays, 11:30 am - 3:30 pm**

Got a computer question?  
Searching for something online?  
Wanna learn how to use WAVE?  
Sheena is available during Thursday drop-in to help you learn more about computers and the internet. Just ask.

### **phone reception mondays - fridays, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm**

If you reach our voicemail between these hours, we may be in a meeting.  
Please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible. All messages are kept strictly confidential.



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## Connecting to Positive Women's Network

### **in person**

#614-1033 Davie Street, Vancouver  
(between Burrard and Thurlow)

### **by mail**

1033 Davie Street, Suite 614  
Vancouver, BC V6E 1M7

### **by phone**

604.692.3000 (local)  
1.866.692.3001 (toll-free in BC)

### **by fax**

604.684.3126

### **by email**

pwn@pwn.bc.ca

### **online**

www.pwn.bc.ca  
www.pwn-wave.ca



*Positive Women's Network supports women living with HIV/AIDS to make informed choices about their health. We provide safe access to HIV/AIDS-related support, advocacy and education/prevention to women and their communities throughout British Columbia, Canada.*

### **support program**

Bronwyn Barrett - Program Coordinator - 604.692.3008 - bronwynb@pwn.bc.ca  
Cara Moody - Oak Tree Outreach Worker - 604.692.3007 - caram@pwn.bc.ca  
Sangam - Support Worker - 604.692.3006 - sangamg@pwn.bc.ca  
Stacie Migwans - Support Worker - 604.692.3005 - staciem@pwn.bc.ca

### **communications and education**

Sheena Sargeant - Communications Coord. - 604.692.3009 - sheenas@pwn.bc.ca  
Jeannie Lowe - Resource Coordinator - 604.692.3011 - jeannel@pwn.bc.ca  
Bronwen Tigar - Young Women's Prevention Coordinator - bronwent@youthco.org

### **administration**

Marcie Summers - Executive Director - 604.692.3010 - marcies@pwn.bc.ca  
L' Hirondelle Financial Services - Bookkeeping - 604.692.3000

### **fund development**

Coreen Douglas - Fund Development Coordinator - 604.692.3000

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