

Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse 2013 Reflection Letter

It is hard to believe another year has come and gone in what seems like such a short timeframe. As 2013 has ended and I look back at what we have accomplished within the past year, I am very pleased with how we have been able to offer help, support and hope to individuals impacted by sexual violence and raise awareness on the prevalence of and impact from this crime in our communities.

Upon reflection, when I think of all the incredible individuals who have selflessly committed themselves towards creating healthy communities free of sexual violence, I can say it has been an absolute privilege and honour for me to work alongside the CCASA Board members, management team, staff, community volunteers and funders who are passionate about and dedicated to addressing the crime of sexual violence and working to change attitudes and behaviours around this crime.

2013 was an exciting year for CCASA. For me, I can sum it up as a year of **opportunity, growth, challenge** and **change** for our agency. Below are a few of the highlights from within the year:

Opportunity

- One of the many programs that we have at CCASA is our Community Outreach Program where we seek to build connections, relationships and partnerships with other service providers and diverse communities to meet the unique needs of all of our clients.

In early 2013 CCASA was approached by a handful of leaders within the Canadian Sikh Network to work in collaboration with each other to address sexual abuse and sexual assault in the Indo Canadian Community. Together a project was initiated to address the risk factors of sexual violence in the Indo Canadian community; to raise awareness of sexual abuse and sexual assault within this community; to increase capacity to support the healing of individuals, families and community members who have been impacted by sexual violence; and to create prevention strategies for safer communities moving forward.

Our partnership is continuing into 2014 where we will not only be able to support the Indo Canadian community, but we will be reaching out to a larger audience so to be able to support a number of culturally diverse communities. It is recognized in Canada that understanding culture and the cultural influences on individual health beliefs and behaviours plays an important role for service providers to provide efficient, effective and appropriate intervention and services to all individuals in our communities. Through these partnerships we hope to be able to create culturally appropriate strategies for all individual to be able to comfortably and safely access the support services they need.

Growth:

- Over the years we have seen the need to move away from looking at sexual violence as a female issue and rather where we need to engage men in becoming involved in working alongside women to end the

crimes of sexual abuse and sexual assault. Creating a world where we can all live outside the threat of violence is a fundamental human right and to do this we need to engage everyone in the conversation.

CCASA has hired two male sexual assault educators to develop the ManEnough? Program, a series of modules that explore male masculinity to deliver to post-secondary men aged 18-25 to empower them to be greater leaders and have stronger voices in working to end gendered based violence.

The ManEnough? Program is currently in the development stage and will be delivered in the fall of 2014.

- Another initiative that CCASA undertook was the development of the Child Sexual Abuse website. One such initiative was the Child Sexual Abuse website. In hopes of extending information and resources to a larger demographic we have begun an extensive development of a child sexual abuse safety and information support and resource website for children, adolescents, adults and educators. We realized that there was an information service delivery gap surrounding the issue of child sexual abuse and decided that an educational website offering information and support resources for any age group would be the best instrument in reaching the largest number of people. It is our hope that this will become a resource across the country and possibly extend to an international audience.

We are knee deep in writing content for the site and are hoping to have it launched in early 2014.

Challenge:

- Volunteers are essential to the high quality of service delivery that we offer and play an integral role in supporting our events and raising awareness of sexual violence to the broader community. One of the challenges we have faced in the past was finding enough for our volunteers to do to keep them busy and wanting to be engaged in our organization. In 2013 it was decided to reengage volunteers to answer after hour calls on our 24 hour Support and Information Line. Over the course of 6 months our Volunteer Program Coordinator grew our volunteer base by 60% and with the team leads at the Distress Centre we worked in partnership to establish a smooth transition of our CCASA volunteer integration into their call centre. We have received positive comments from both the volunteers who are happy to be doing such important work and from callers who have let us know that during periods of high stress, our volunteers have been able to help ground them and support their need or request over the phone. A caller who had spoken to one of our volunteers called CCASA the next day and relayed her experience as “the way [the volunteer] spoke to me over the phone made me feel like someone was wrapping their arm around me.”

We are thrilled to be able to utilize volunteers in this capacity to help support our clients.

- A significant challenge for our organization was a decrease of donation dollars from individual donors. We know that we live in a city filled with extremely generous Calgarians and believe a lot of donation dollars went to the Red Cross for flood relief from the June 2013 flood that caused significant destruction in our city.

Though our agency was significantly impacted by the decrease in donation dollars, with some creative shuffling, an increase in our volunteer base and some restructuring, we were able to ensure that our

service delivery to our clients was not disrupted and that we were still able to offer help and support services to our community members.

Change:

- CCASA owns the rights to and has been delivering the “Who Do You Tell?”™ (“WDYT?”™) child sexual abuse safety and empowerment program to elementary school aged children, their parents and teachers in both Public and Catholic schools in Calgary since 1994. This program has been reviewed and gone through best practices and has been found to be an extremely effective program in helping to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse and its effect on victims and families.

In striving to provide the highest quality programs in our community that align with best practice research, CCASA has been working to create a new and revised “Who Do You Tell?”™ Program. With the support of FCSS two curriculum designers with experience in both sexual health and elementary education curricula were hired to assist with the revisions. These revisions began in the 2012-2013 school year and the new curriculum that includes the original core curriculum components as well as new learning objectives which are aligned with those outlined by Alberta Education was implemented in schools in the fall of the school year for grades one and two.

With the launch of the revised “Who Do You Tell?”™ Program ongoing feedback will be collected and reviewed in an effort to improve and finalize the curriculum within the next reporting period. CCASA will continue to develop the supplementary curriculum for grades three to six with a goal to have all development completed and finalized by 2015.

We have a great team at CCASA and I am so pleased with all we have accomplished together not only over the past year but also for the past 18 years prior in supporting individuals in our communities.

Martin Luther King, famously said that the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. For all the work that is being done by hundreds of thousands of individuals throughout our world working towards creating equality, safety, educational opportunities, and change we are all making a difference.

I am looking forward to another exciting and positive year in 2014.

Danielle Aubry, MSW, RSW
Executive Director
Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse