

Annual Report to the AGM of SWOVA September 16, 2015

by Lynda Laushway



Salt Spring elementary School Choir Performing at International Women's day Dinner 2015

INTRODUCTION

This past year has been a year of transitions at SWOVA. Our long-time Executive Director, Lynda Laushway retired at the end of March. At this point the position is vacant. Amidst our transitions SWOVA continued to offer ground-breaking violence prevention, leadership and healthy relationships programs to youth through our Respectful Relationships (R+R) program, Pass It On Program, and the Salish Seas Girl's Leadership Program (SSGLP).

We completed our 15th year of delivery of the Respectful Relationships program (R+R) in partnership with our school district. Approximately 400 students in grades 7, 8, 9, 10 received 10 - 12 hours of healthy relationships education and skill-building. Last year we added a two-hour workshop for all grade 11 students on Internet Safety. To the best of my knowledge we are the only school district in Canada that has this level of consistent and comprehensive healthy relationships programming. The Pass It On program was also delivered this past year, for the seventh year.

Salish Sea Girls Leadership program continued with funding from the Victoria Foundation, SSI Foundation, SSI Foundation of Youth and the Lobstick Foundation. The focus was on youth-led family violence prevention.

As always we are grateful at SWOVA to have the support of our community, the confidence of our funders and the commitment of our Board members to continue to forge groundbreaking work that makes our community and many other communities in British Columbia safer places for everyone to grow and flourish.

PROGRAMS

Respectful Relationships (R+R) Program in School District #64

Our 15th year of Respectful Relationships program (R+R) was delivered in School District #64 by Adult facilitators, Sharyn Carroll and Kevin Vowles. Over 200 hours of healthy and respectful relationships education was delivered to youth in our community. The R+R Youth Team had 24 members who helped facilitate workshops to the grade 7 and 8 students.

The R+R program presented some challenges this past year. Some concerns were expressed by parents and some students about engagement of boys in the program. Many discussions have taken place with the school district personnel and this has resulted in our agreement to carry out an R+R review with parents, teachers and students participating this fall. Our goal is that this important program will become even stronger.

The new Respectful Relationships (R+R) internet safety curricula was pilot-tested with grade 11 classes and went well.

This fall R+R will be delivered at SIMS and the Outer Islands. The curriculum will be changed to accommodate combined classes of grades 6/7 and 7/8.

Pass It On: Women and Girls Working Together for Health and Safety

The Pass It On Girls program completed its 7th year of delivery in May. Kate Maurice mentored and supervised fifteen young women from the high school to mentor 15 grade 8 girls. The high school young women provide structured group and individual mentorship for the grade 8 girls throughout the school year. The mentorship builds relationships that will support the girls at this critical age as they prepare to enter high school. They form relationships that assist them in their immediate lives and also make their transition to high school easier. The issues being addressed are health and safety for girls and young women, providing support for grade 8 girls, and encouraging youth leadership.

The project culminated with our annual Spark Fest event at the Harbour House Hotel. The young women organised a fabulous evening of music, poetry and improv. The support from our community continues to make this an inspiring event.



Youth Performing at Spark Fest 015

Sexual Health Workshops

In June SSGLP delivered an afternoon of sexual health workshops to all grade 11 students at the high school in conjuncture with community healthcare professionals. Vouching for more equal representation of leadership and voice in these workshops, SSGLP members recruited 12 young men in grade 12 to join them in facilitating, and collectively established the content that they then delivered to their peers.

Salish Seas Girl's Leadership Project

SSGLP was coordinated by Andria Scanlon. The youth advisory committee, made up of 10-15 young women, met weekly to discuss social justice, empowerment, and community development on Salt Spring Island.

Throughout the winter of 2014/2015, the focus for the weekly meetings shifted to violence and sexual assault prevention for youth living in the Gulf Islands. Various strategies were discussed. The girls decided that their focus for this year's sexual health workshops at GISS would be consent, risk negotiation, sexual assault prevention, and sexual orientation as focal points of discussion.

Peace Kid's Project

Unfortunately there was no funding to deliver Peace Kids programming this past year. There will however be some Peace Kids workshops delivered to students in grades 4 and 5 in the coming school year.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SWOVA publishes a regular BLOG which is posted every other week. It contains news about our programs and other topics related to violence prevention and healthy relationships education. If anyone would like to receive the BLOG posts by e-mail, please contact the SWOVA office (info@swova.org) and ask to be placed on the distribution list.

We also have a Facebook page and an electronic newsletter. Our website is updated and is more interactive than ever with a number of short films on our work posted on the website at, www.swova.org

OUTREACH



Young Changemakers with Elizabeth May at International Women's Day Dinner 2015

SWOVA sponsored the 2nd annual International Women's Day dinner on March 7th. The theme was to honour young women Changemakers. Elizabeth May did a fabulous job as Mistress of ceremonies and it was once again an overwhelming success. A wonderful group of SWOVA volunteers organized the sold-out community event.

SWOVA also participates in the VAWIR Committee (Violence Against Women in Relationships) along with IWAV, Victim Services and the RCMP.

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

On an ongoing basis, SWOVA offers a free lending service of print and video materials, as well as organizing community education events. We also offer a referral service for people seeking information or assistance with issues related to violence prevention.

Each year, we mark December 6th as a day of remembrance for prevention of violence against women, with a candlelight vigil in Ganges. This year it will be in Centennial Park, Ganges, at 6:00 pm on Sunday, December 6th. This is the 25th anniversary of the murder of 14 women at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec. It will be led by the Respectful Relationships Youth Team.

Each year we carry the SWOVA banner- "Empowering Youth for a Better Tomorrow" in the local Pride Parade.

CONCLUSION

SWOVA continues to deliver quality programs to our local community and to work in partnership with communities in various locations in British Columbia. It is through the support of our members, our volunteer Board, and our community that we are able to carry out this important violence prevention work.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO OUR CURRENT FUNDERS:

The Canadian Women's Foundation
BC Gaming
The Koerner Foundation
SD #64
Coast Capital Foundation
Salt Spring Island Foundation
Salt Spring Island Foundation of Youth
Victoria Foundation
F.K. Morrow Foundation
United Way of Greater Victoria
Island Savings Credit Union
Lobstick Foundation
Human Resources Development Canada
Mid-Island Coop
Thrifty Foods
Country Grocer
Harbour House Hotel