YEARS IN REVIEW
Since 2006 I have had the privilege of participating on the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Island Men's Trauma Counselling Society, the MTC. Since its inception, the MTC has been growing and changing, and this year has been no exception. While continuing to support the goals of the MTC in her work as one of our counsellors and in her role of Clinical Supervisor for the counselling team, Alana Samson handed over the MTC reins to Paula Greene in spring 2015. As the new Executive Director, Paula is bringing new vision to the MTC. Her energy and compassion are apparent, and we look forward to seeing where we can go together under her care. The Board’s gratitude for this smooth executive transition is immense.

This year has brought changes to the Board as well, from welcoming Justin Munro and Trevor Franklin to the board in the fall, to saying a heartfelt thank you and farewell to Bram Goldwater. It is time to offer my sincere thanks to Justin, Trevor, Bram and the other members of the Board, Brent Johnston, Hunter McDonald, Jon Goody and Peter Stanford whose sensible advice, questions and care make working for this organization meaningful and enjoyable.

While the environment for non-profit organizations continues to be very challenging, the Board’s shared sense of purpose will help the MTC work effectively to provide services to our clients and to promote change in our community through a better awareness of men’s struggle with the effects of trauma.

On behalf of the board I want to thank past Executive Director, Alana Samson, the Victim Services team and our counsellors who all craft their way into the heart of the matter with our brave, amazing clients. We also want to extend our gratitude to administrative assistant TJ Furlani, who provides professional support to the centre in every dimension. And a big thank you to our volunteers who share their time and our hopes that the MTC will thrive.

Kerry Patriarche, Board Chair

FAREWELL TO BRAM GOLDSWATER (ALANA SAMSON, CO-FOUNDER MTC)
Dr. Bram Goldwater has been with the agency since our first organizational meeting at the University of Victoria in September of 2003. Until his retirement eight years ago Bram worked for many years at the University of Victoria as a professor of psychology and has brought to his role on the board the wisdom and insights he has acquired as a teacher.

As the longest-serving member, Bram faithfully supported the agency for 12 years, serving on the Board of Directors in various positions including member-at-large, Secretary, vice-Chair and Chair. He designed our logo and he volunteered for four years as an office volunteer. Bram has made an outstanding contribution to the board with his supportive and cooperative nature and his inquisitive mind. Bram is a sweet-natured and intelligent man who brings out the best in others. Easy to get along with, Bram has helped to set a positive tone at board meetings and at special events in the community. He has also brought several members onto the board since he joined. By his years of service Bram has provided the board with the kind of continuity that only a long-standing member can. Although we are sorry to see Bram go, we support his decision to step down after so many years of consistent involvement in the work of the agency. Thank you so much Bram for everything you have done to keep our doors open and for your participation in the agency’s effort to help male survivors of trauma. We wish you the very best as you move into the future. You will not be forgotten.
In the year 2015/2016 Sue and Frances did 266 intakes. This was in addition to their existing case load of clients. This is an increase of 11% over the previous year. We see an average of one new client a day and this means an ever increasing case load. Unfortunately we have not had a similar increase in funding. When men come to the Men’s Trauma Centre (MTC) it is often as a last resort after trying other ways of coping with their emotional pain. One of the most frustrating things we face is putting men on a wait list for service because they cannot afford counselling after they have found the courage to come to us to ask for help.

Practitioners and agencies who know about the work we do often refer men for help who are not adequately housed or fed. While we would like to help these men, trauma therapy cannot be effective unless they are in a stable living situation and have their basic needs met. Many men seek help from the medical system and are prescribed medication to deal with their symptoms. This does not deal with the underlying problems and is only a band-aid solution. Negative responses from the community reinforce men's belief that they do not deserve help, or should just “get over it”. This makes them reluctant to reach out for professional help. Treatment programs in prison are focused on changing behaviour without understanding why the behaviour is happening. Programs are not trauma informed.

About two years ago Det. Cst. Justin Munro of the Special Victims Unit at VicPD approached the Men’s Trauma Centre to talk about the work we do. He expressed an interest in improving the experience of men who reach out for help from the justice system. Following this initial conversation Sue and Frances worked with Justin in developing ways to make an open, safe environment for men who want to report historical sexual abuse to the police. The process has since been both enhanced and streamlined and helps the victim services workers provide a more integrated response to clients. As a result there has been an increase in both the number of men who decide to report to police and an increase in the number of cases forwarded to crown.

“You are the first person that has not tried to suppress my feelings in any way. I know I act distasteful sometimes in sessions. You're patience is outstanding.”

MTC CLIENT

“Bob is 35. He has been coming to the Men’s Trauma Centre for three years, off and on. Visits are sporadic as a result of his mental health situation and substance abuse. Bob’s mother suffered from schizophrenia and his home life was quite chaotic. He was also emotionally and sexually abused. For some years he had used drugs to cope with his emotional pain and was often in trouble with the police. Bob knew his abuser was still alive and he wanted him to be accountable for what he had done. He was terrified of going to police because of his own convictions and a negative relationship with law enforcement. He didn’t think the police would ever believe him.

Over a period of about six months, with patient support by Sue and an informal meeting with Justin, an environment of safety and trust was developed. Bob knew that he could stop the process at any time if he didn’t want to continue. He was finally ready to make a formal statement to police and took that step. The file has been forwarded to crown and Bob will continue to receive support as the case moves through the criminal justice system. Without this informed team approach, the offender might never have been apprehended and Bob would continue to struggle. Instead he now looks up to Justin as a positive male role model, something that has been missing for most of his life. A lot of healing has already taken place. We will continue to support him along this journey.” (Name changed to protect privacy).
Group Report (Judith Prat – Therapist)

In 2015-16 three stage one groups, “You are Not Alone: Trauma Stabilization Group for Men”, were conducted. The total number of participants that completed the three 10 session groups was 14. In every case PTSD symptoms were reduced. The following quotes from participants capture what the group has meant to these men and its effectiveness.

Participant comments:
• More open minded and understanding
• Less anxiety
• New skills; starting to use coping skills more often
• An incredible learning experience
• Safe place to share; it felt positive to share
• Feel more freedom or ability to make new connections
• I am participating more in my community (I used to make a point of being isolated)
• Learned to communicate with others more easily
• Motivated to set boundaries
• Can speak up in situations where I used to remain silent
• Feeling more connected, assertive and hopeful
• Understanding that although I have issues they are not all that I am
• What I thought were defects became challenges to be worked on.

“This is the only place where I feel real; everywhere else I just hide.”

MTC CLIENT

2015-16 Stats

266 Intakes
2 Groups
1605 Sessions

Therapist Report (Marilyn Sundeen R.C.C.)

Challenges and Issues facing MTC Clients:

The issues facing MTC clients are complex and multi-layered. The abuse occurred in early childhood and was sustained throughout their adolescence. The effect on the normal course of cognitive and emotional development cannot be overstated. Their lives are compromised in so many areas. Several of my clients grew up in group homes or in a constant rotation of foster homes. Often, they have never experienced a person to whom they feel attached nor a person on whom they can rely and trust. Given that, it is understandable how their personal and professional lives are in disarray when they come to our centre. Many have never had a steady job; many have long-standing addictions issues. They often do not have the basics of how to engage with or relate to another person. As therapists our work begins with being a dependable and trust-worthy person for that client.

Therein lies another major issue facing our clients which is that they often block or resist this offer of a professional bond. It takes time, patience and hard, painstaking work before we begin to see even incremental changes in the protective wall our clients have understandably erected around them.

Which brings us to the third issue facing our clients, which is funding. As mentioned, this work takes time; many of my clients have been coming for 2 years or more. If the funding agency cancels or restricts the service, our clients are once again left without support. Society has once again cast them by the wayside. Sadly, the instability of funding mirrors the instability and chaos of their developing years and exacerbates the difficulty of the therapist’s work. May I offer that it is this therapist’s opinion that if the measure of a culture is how it treats its most vulnerable – then it is a sad comment on ours.
Programs - services are available to all men and any person who identifies as male.

Community Based Victim Assistance
Our Victim Services Program provides free short term help to adult and mature youth male victims who have experienced trauma, sexual assault or who are survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse.

Counselling Services
*Individual*
Our counsellors meet one-on-one with men who have experienced sexual abuse or other trauma. Sessions are for one hour and are usually scheduled weekly.

*Group*
Trauma Stabilization Group and stage 2 trauma group
A 10 week group for men who have experienced trauma. This group has consistently decreased the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in men.

Practicum Students
We are a practicum placement for final year Masters of Counselling Students and take between 2-3 students per year.

Training and Professional Development
We host 1-2 training sessions per year for professionals working in other agencies who provide services to men.

Thank you to the staff, volunteers and funders for making a difference to men in need.

**Board of Directors**
Kerry Patriarche - Chair
Brent Johnston - Treasurer
Peter Stanford - Secretary
Jon Goody
Hunter McDonald
Trevor Franklin
Justin Munro

**Staff**
Paula Greene - Executive Director
Alana Samson - Co-Founder, Clinical Lead
Frances Strauss - Co-Founder and Community Based Victim Service
Sue Farr - Community Based Victim Service
TJ Furlani - Office Administrator
Judith Prat - Therapist
Will Bratt - Therapist
Sarah Jenkinson - Therapist
Marilyn Sundeen - Therapist
Mike Schmalz - Therapist

**Practicum Students**
Mike Yates
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