

# ANNUAL REPORT MEN'S TRAUMA CENTRE



## The Power of One Man's Voice

Over the last year we have seen and heard of the devastating effects one man's actions can cause. When one man in a position of trust and power decides to abuse his position as an adult with children in his care, it has devastating effects. The victims of alleged perpetrators Harry Saad and Andy Van Goor have found their collective voices and reported their abuse that lasted decades and covered several provinces.

A survivor of Harry Sadd's alleged abuse was inspired by former NHL players Theo Fleury and Sheldon Kennedy, both of whom shared their stories of sexual assault and found his own courage to report his own abuse. When a man decides to speak up he can break generations of silence, take back his power and, as we have seen, encourage many other men to find the courage to speak up too.

When men come to the Men's Trauma Centre some choose to report to the police and others don't. That's a choice they make, but we are here to support and listen to them and inform men about their options. For some men even being able to physically speak is a challenge (as documented in Victim Service 2016 report, page 2), for them just sitting in the room with someone who believes them and is willing to listen when they are ready to speak is their way to break their silence.

Counselling is one way men can find the courage to sit with their trauma, their fear and their shame and finally come to the understanding that what happened to them wasn't their fault; to come to the understanding that abuse robbed them of the life they could have had. Yet therapy is not for everyone and is no easy ride, we ask men to take responsibility and change the ways they may have learnt to cope, to step into their fear and start to heal; and healing is possible, abuse doesn't have to continue to rule their lives.

When a man finds his voice, it tells society that abuse of children continues to be too prevalent, that sexual assault does happen to men and that men deserve to find help and hope in their futures.

Kerry Patriarche

Chair, Board of Directors.

## We say goodbye to Board member Hunter McDonald

Hunter McDonald has served on the Board of Directors since 2012. This year he made the decision to step down from the Board. Hunter brought his experience and understanding of Trauma from his time in the RCMP understanding first hand some of the issues that Men who experience trauma experience. He has been a wonderful advocate for the Men's Trauma Centre and helped introduce some of our current Board members to us.

We will miss Hunter and thank him for his time and dedication to the Men's Trauma Centre.

# Victim Services Report 2016

The work we do at the Men's Trauma Centre is incredibly rewarding however, it does come with challenges. When a man comes in to see us he often has additional needs as a result of his trauma; mental health, physical health, disability issues etc. As we see in the community at large, mental health services are inadequate. This puts a strain on us as Victim Services workers who are often unable to find appropriate services to meet client needs. Many clients could be helped by having continuity of care with a family physician but this is often impossible to find. This presents problems with diagnoses, appropriate medication and assistance with applications for Persons With Disability support.

The reality of the fentanyl crisis hit close to home this year. We had seen a young man who was living at Anawim House. His trauma history was significant beginning with his adoption at age 2. He was feeling positive about receiving help at the Men's Trauma Centre (MTC) and funding for counselling was approved by Anawim House. Sadly, about five days after the intake appointment, he died from a fentanyl overdose. This tragic loss was felt acutely by those who had worked with him.

Several issues arise around inadequate funding for men to attend the Men's Trauma Centre. Many men who come through our doors have no financial means to pay for trauma counselling. Often these clients have been referred to us from funded programs such as mental health. Whilst we do offer reduced rates when men see a practicum student, this can mean much longer wait times than if they had funding for therapy.

Despite the challenges, we know we are making a difference in the lives of men who seek our help and, by extension, their families, friends and communities. We have received many cards of thanks and heartfelt expressions of appreciation. We have had considerable success in assisting clients in applying for disability benefits which can improve their quality of life and provide much needed relief.

Many of the men who come to the Men's Trauma Centre for help do so fearfully and reluctantly. In most cases trust has been broken at some time in their lives. This means that our first task is to build a relationship and develop trust. If the client comes back for a second appointment, we have to assume that we could be on the right track!

Our ongoing partnership with William Head Institution continues to result in referrals. We visit the institution two or three times a year for intake sessions, seeing up to eight inmates per visit. This is followed by communication with the inmate and his Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) with the goal of seeing him at our office either on an escorted visit or when he is on parole in the community. The transition from inmate to counselling client at MTC can be a challenge both in terms of paperwork and logistics as well as the emotional adjustment involved; but it is worth it. One client in particular has been steadfast in pursuing this and has been coming to MTC for over a year and is now successfully engaged in counselling. It is clear that the support from MTC has played a significant part in his successful transition to life in the community.

Our partnership with Victoria Police Department's Special Victims Unit has created a safe and welcoming pathway for men to begin a journey of reporting historical sexual abuse. This continues to be an invaluable source of help in our work.

Many of the client stories we are privileged to share demonstrate tremendous courage, strength, tenacity and resilience in the face of great suffering. In particular I was moved by a comment from a client who, during his intake appointment was not able to speak. He had alerted me to this problem when he contacted me by email. I assured him that I would not let that stand in the way of his receiving support. Over the course of the next few visits he was able to begin to tell me what was going on for him. Recently, as we talked about the possibility of starting counselling, I asked if he found our appointments helpful. He told me emphatically that they are and that he leaves here feeling lighter.

Other stories take longer to unfold. One client first came to us about three years ago after being in recovery from drug addiction for more than a year. He met with a counsellor, but it was clear to him that he couldn't focus on this right away. He needed to sort through a number of life issues before being ready to tackle counselling for childhood emotional and physical abuse. And so, with intermittent contact with our Victim Services program, he coped with one challenge after another. The first was to reconnect and reconcile with his disabled twin brother. This came with layers of guilt and regret. They had been in foster care in the 70s where the abuse occurred. Not long after, the brother passed away. The client also needed expert care to continue to manage his addiction and extreme anxiety. Then his father, who had mental health problems, became ill and the client oversaw his care until he too passed away. Running through all of this were issues of housing, work, income and adult children. He steadfastly kept contact and asked for support along the way. A week ago he called and said he is ready to begin counselling.

Respectfully submitted  
Susan Farr  
Frances Strauss

## 2016-17 stats

269 intakes

3 Groups

1500 Therapy Sessions

## Group Work in Focus

The Stage One "You Are Not Alone" Trauma Stabilization Group for Men is a 10-week educational program that supports and begins to facilitate the healing process for adult males who have experienced the effects of trauma. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can disrupt a person's social, physical, mental, and emotional worlds leaving them in a state of heightened anxiety for years. PTSD affects one's ability to cope with everyday stressors, to navigate relationships, and to care for themselves limiting their capacity to experience a true sense of life satisfaction.

The group is designed to provide tools and to build skills to assist participants to:

- Increase their personal health and well-being
- Increase their sense of connection and belonging
- Increase their ability to create personal safety so they can begin to navigate difficult emotions outside of the group and more effectively manage and reduce PTSD-specific symptoms

The Stage Two Trauma Recovery Group was developed and delivered, with funding from the Victoria Foundation. For men who have experienced current or historic trauma their overall health and wellness is severely affected. For those who have engaged in Stage One work, which can help with symptom reduction and better emotional regulation, they may still experience difficulties with healthy interactions and connections with others, thereby impacting their sense of well-being.

The aims of the Stage Two group were to:

- Continue making gains in improving life satisfaction, health and well-being
- Increase sense of belonging by bringing men together in a safe, facilitated group setting
- Decrease the overall stress levels of the participants by helping them to more effectively manage and reduce their specific symptoms (e.g., anxiety, depression, PTSD) and more effectively regulate their emotions (e.g., anger, sadness, shame).

## A Therapist's View

It has been five years since I first joined Men's Trauma Centre and I remain as committed to its philosophy as I did in 2012.

Our work is both challenging and inspiring in equal measure. It may seem surprising but clients often push back and resist change with the same vigour that their therapist is encouraging movement toward the client's goal. Clients often struggle with releasing themselves from long-held beliefs that their life is hopeless. However, when a client said to me "I hate that what happened to me *still* affects every part of my life", I know that this is the opening for him to consider change as an option.

The professional relationships we form with our clients are as important as the clinical skills we bring. One client said that our sessions "are the only place where I feel I matter". Change cannot happen until a person feels seen, heard and valued. There is nothing that defines us more as humans than our ability to connect with another. One client who I have been seeing for several years reported "coming here saved my life". Another said "coming here has made me able to make sense (of my symptoms)". These statements are the reason why we do what we do.

As therapists we witness situations where the trauma was so horrendous and/or long term that some doors in life may be forever closed; likewise we witness the profound resilience and share in the grandeur of the human spirit when life starts to become an adventure for the client, probably for the first time.

My hope is that through the tireless efforts to garner funding and the commitment of the MTC team, the Centre will thrive in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Sundeen R.C.C

**Programs** - services are available to all men and any person who identifies as male.

### **Community Based Victim Assistance**

The 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  
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### **Staff**

Paula Greene - Executive Director  
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Frances Strauss (Co-Founder) - Community Based Victim Service  
Sue Farr - Community Based Victim Service  
TJ Furlani - Office Administrator  
Judith Prat - Therapist  
Sarah Jenkinson - Therapist  
Marilyn Sundeen - Therapist  
Mike Schmalz - Therapist  
**Practicum Students**  
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