



## The Gift of Hope

### A COUNSELLOR'S STORY

Counselling can be like exercise. Maybe you can relate? You don't do it for a while (take an intentional break, or resist), and then re-engage and it feels incredible to body, mind, and spirit.

I hadn't seen a client or done any intake interviews for about six weeks. In August, I found myself unexpectedly doing an intake interview due to a scheduling conflict of the assigned counsellor. The client intake form indicated this person was experiencing a high level of anxiety and was recently dealing with trauma where memories had come up from sometime ago.

There was a sense of desperation to the scenario. The client was prompt and I was thankful I was able to get set-up and grounded in the room prior to their arrival.

The client brought an object that soothed them and I could tell fairly quickly there was a notable healthy reliance to said object. It was actually quite

admirable seeing the strength that this connection provided.

When we got to the family of origin questions there was such hesitation it was palpable. I respected that sense and told the client I was not going to poke or prod through this section and they could answer whatever they felt comfortable with. With a look of fear they nodded in agreement.

*"The grace & gratitude of what we all do in these 8 x 10 rooms. For each other"*

heard that from someone. "You are very brave." Through some long pauses, deep breathing, and continuous connection with the client and their soothing object we did it. We collectively made it through that hour.

Upon leaving, I escorted the client through the reception area to the front door. They looked me firmly

eye-to-eye and said, "Thank you for volunteering."

I said, "You're very welcome. Thank you for coming in today."

As I was driving home I was replaying the intake interview in my head. I felt I had served this client for what they needed on that day, in those particular moments. I heard myself say out loud, "I'm a f\*\*king volunteer counsellor."

And there it landed in my body.

The grace and gratitude of what we all do in these 8 x 10 rooms. For each other. I had this vision of handing an invisible gift to that client. It was called hope.

**Question:** What were the challenges growing up?

**Answer:** Many.

**Question:** What were the issues (death, abuse, grief)?

**Answer:** All of it.

And so it went.

I expressed sincerely how brave I believed they were. The response was a look of disbelief. I felt certain this was the first time the client had ever

#### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Our 2017/18 Board of Directors
- 2016/17 stats
- The Gift of Hope - a volunteer counsellor story
- Marriage is Hard - a volunteer counsellor story
- 'Tis the Season, Brenda Wilson

Citizens  
COUNSELLING  
CENTRE



**We will build capacity through state of the heart counselling.**

Friends of the Centre is published twice per year and is distributed throughout the Citizens' Counselling Centre Community.

# Trip-a-Fool!

Among all of Citizens' crafty ways we work to keep our ship afloat (our clients who somehow find the money to contribute to their counselling costs, committed community supporters Greater Victoria United Way and Victoria Foundation, Provincial Employees Community Services Fund (PECSF), Tip a Fool supporters, Thrifty Foods, WestJet, a few amazing patrons, donors, and faithful monthly donors) are our latest schemes: A Personal Development Sampler Weekend Workshop (in development - more on that SOON!), and a raffle for 200,000 Aeroplan Miles. Here's more on that:

Next April, at Tip a Fool 2018, we will once again be drawing for the winner of our travel raffle - Trip a Fool (see what we did there). In past years we have had the very good fortune of being blessed with two anywhere-that-WestJet-flies passes from our good friends at WestJet. As the community-minded airline gets a lot of requests for their



Miles we collected as the grand prize. The tickets will be \$25 each, or a book of 5 for \$100. We're only selling 600 tickets, so the odds of winning are really good, as these things go.

## DONATE YOUR AEROPLAN MILES & WIN!

generous community support we're not able to get these passes every year. So - we have come up with another way to offer a travel prize through the good folks at Aeroplan.

From now until January 31 we'll be asking the community (you) to donate some or all of your Aeroplan miles, with the goal of us collecting up to 200,000 miles by January 31, 2018.

Then, starting Feb 1, 2018, we'll be selling raffle tickets for the Aeroplan

The raffle will take place at Tip a Fool 2018 (tickets are on sale NOW - see TipaFool.ca for ticket info), and while you don't have to be there to win, if you are, the prize will be even more awesome! Stay tuned for more on that closer to Tip a Fool. And - as a bonus - for every 10,000 miles you donate, we'll give you a book of five tickets for free. That's a win-win-win!

So long story short - please check out your Aeroplan Miles account and see if you are able to spare a mile or 10,000 miles to help Citizens' Counselling Centre support the emotional health of our community.

Go to: [beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/charity/1128](http://beyondmiles.aeroplan.com/eng/charity/1128) or the Citizens' Counselling website.

## Board of Directors 2017/18

**Chair** - Chris Hoyer  
**Vice Chair** - Andy Wachtel  
**Treasurer** - Lisa Underdown  
**Secretary** - Sara Comish  
**Special Advisor** - Eliza Bates-Smith

### Members at Large

David Hume  
 Bev Regan  
 Arla Sinclair

### Counsellor Representatives

Carla Macdonald  
 John Manthorpe  
 Terri Layman

"She was very knowledgeable and I felt safe talking to her. She had the experience I needed in a counsellor!"

~Centre Client

## Do you or does someone you know work for the BC Government?

If you do - have you considered naming the Centre as your Donor Choice for your PECSF charitable donations? You can designate that your donations go directly to the Centre. We'll receive those donations twice annually in August and March. See the PECSF Charities page on the PECSF website for more info!



Provincial Employees Community Services Fund

## Relationship work is hard ...

**ON THE HARD WORK:** It was a sh\*t show to put it politely ... the barn doors swung open and the four horsemen of the apocalypse ran amok! I was nearly trampled in the stampede... OK, so maybe it wasn't quite that dramatic... but I want to make sure you get the picture. So much animosity!

At one point I found myself asking them if this relationship was really worth saving? Followed by, "We need some ground rules, because I'm not going to spend my Monday evenings refereeing while the two of you fling nasty insults at each other." Words that felt incredibly awkward and borderline inappropriate, but nevertheless - clearly needed if there was going to be any value whatsoever in continuing.

I left our first session wondering what the heck I had gotten myself into,

and thinking that this was "way above my pay grade". I honestly didn't see any value in our first session and more or less figured they would not be back.



And then later that evening I get this text from 'him', "I have to say how much \_\_\_ and I both liked you, and how well you handled such a difficult situation. Tonight was only a starting point but something must have happened as it's the best night we've had at home for

as long as I can remember. Thank you! And see you next week."

We've now had our second session, they say this counselling has been the best thing that has happened in their relationship since they met. I'm not sure what that means, but the second session went really well.

The moral of the story for me is that it has been a great reminder that there is nothing I have to do, can do, or should do, to 'fix' their situation. My role is to apply the skills and principles that I have learned from my training, and remember that these are "their sessions" not "mine".

Funny how a little bit of disaster mixed with positive feedback can make all the difference in the world.



## Taking a leap of faith ... by Brenda Wilson

coming spring. We took a leap of faith that the funding required would be forthcoming and set off to find 36 suitable individuals with 'the right stuff'. Come September we started two very enthusiastic cohorts of volunteers who are being ably educated by our Trainer Andre Serzisko and the volunteer training team.

The Centre has always been blessed with an exceptional quality of volunteer and the selection process has changed little over the last many years. We look for the natural counsellor, someone with life experience and folks who are open, curious and committed to learning about themselves. Then we try to get a mix of men and women of all

ages that will combine into a bonded, committed, supportive group who will journey together for over 150 hours of training. The training mixes personal process work and skill training.

The Centre offers only one to ten counselling sessions with a client therefore the volunteer training stresses models which lend themselves to brief counselling - reflective listening models, cognitive behavioural approaches, mindfulness practices, and solution oriented models. By spring 2018 we will have dozens of new volunteer counsellors and that is very good news.

Right now, December 2017, we have been able to get our wait list down to

4-6 weeks. Our goal going forward is to keep it to under a month. We feel that is part of what "quality" service means to us. We'll keep you posted as to how we are doing with this goal.

In December I try my best to keep my priorities straight and enjoy rather than stress. First among these priorities is to thank you. If you are receiving this newsletter - thank you for reading it, for being a volunteer here and/or for being a Friend of the Centre through your donations or general support of what we do. We are doing well with your help.

I wish each of you a happy, healthy 2018.

*Brenda Wilson*



CitizensCounselling



Our funders this year include:



**United Way**  
OF GREATER VICTORIA  
COMMUNITY PARTNER



Provincial Employees Community Services Fund

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia Gaming Commission.



And hopefully YOU!

# Here's what we've been up to this year

## IN THIS PAST YEAR:

- 8,990 hours of counselling
- 1146 clients served
- 110 volunteer counsellors
- 8.2 sessions per client (on average)

## TOP PRESENTING ISSUES:

- Stress/Anxiety/Panic Attacks
- Depression
- Relationship/Communication
- Self Esteem / Identity Issues
- Addictions (past/present)
- Physical/Emotional Abuse (past/present)
- Suicide attempts (past/present)

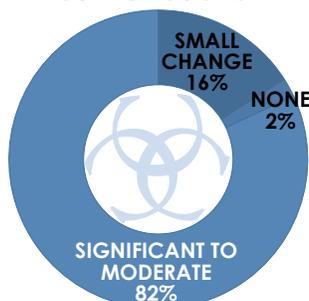
## DID YOU KNOW?

100% of direct service to clients is provided by our trained volunteer counsellors.

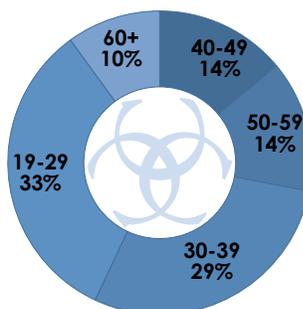
\$1,000,000 is the market value of counselling services provided by trained volunteers

33% of our clients are between the ages of 19 and 29

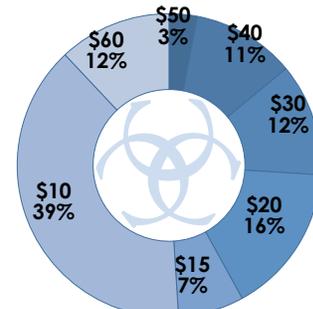
### CLIENT REPORTED CHANGES AS A RESULT OF COUNSELLING



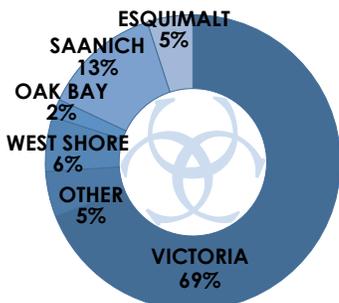
### CLIENTS BY AGE



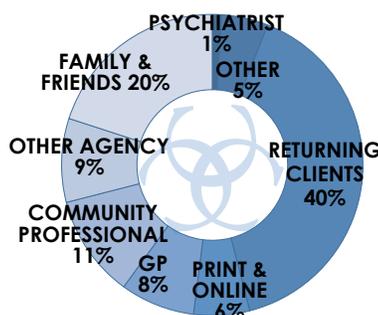
### FEES



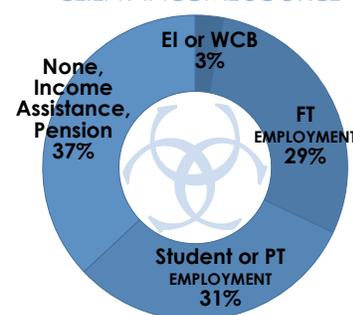
### AREA OF RESIDENCE



### REFERRAL SOURCES



### CLIENT INCOME SOURCE



## CLIENT FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTION "HOW WAS THIS COUNSELLING PROCESS VALUABLE TO YOU?"

"He was very supportive and helped me look at things in different perspectives."

"It provided a safe space in which to talk about deeply private and personal struggles that were at best, interfering with my ability to function in my day-to-day life and at worst, utterly crippling."

"My counsellor was very compassionate and understanding/encouraging."

**"Thank you for being there and being affordable."**

"Thank you for providing such amazing services. You are all changing lives for the better."

"I was able to share my worries, doubts and stresses in a safe environment where I was able to get the support I needed."

"Being heard by an objective person who was present neutral and positive was most valuable to me."

**Greater Victoria Citizens' Counselling Centre**

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