

# YWCA Yellowknife Annual Report 2009-2010

ready to  
move on!



**YWCA**  
YELLOWKNIFE

A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN



# One Family's Story

## YWCA Yellowknife's Emergency and Transitional Housing Program



Photos by Kirsten Murphy

They are a family like any other, enjoying a sunny, summer day at the Long Lake beach in Yellowknife: a little splashing, a lunch of hot dogs, a few precious minutes with a book. It's not just a day out, but a celebration for Burton, Lacey and Tanya. During the months they lived at YWCA Yellowknife's emergency and transitional housing program, they worked hard to become a family not just in name, but in every sense of the word. With new strength and purpose, they are ready to move on.

Burton Dodman faced a crisis near the end of 2008. His addictions were taking control, and he was out of work. His relationship with his girlfriend was falling apart and he needed a new place to live. Not only that, but he had to make a choice about continuing to take care of Lacey, his ten year old daughter, or whether she'd be better off with his parents in Edmonton. "I didn't know how to be a dad," Burton remembers now. "Everything was out of control and we needed somewhere to go."

A friend suggested he apply for one of the emergency suites for homeless families at YWCA Yellowknife's Rockhill apartments. "Just because it's a YWCA, doesn't mean it's not for single dads," says Burton. He applied for an emergency suite and moved in just a week and a half later. "I didn't have to worry about where to sleep, and I didn't have to drag Lacey around," Burton says. "For me, that was hugest part."

In return, Burton followed some simple rules and made changes to improve his situation. “You can’t keep doing what brought you here in the first place,” he says. “Now I’ve put more work into sobriety than into addiction, and I’m never looking back.” He enrolled Lacey in Grade 4 at nearby Weledeh, and “she’s doing okay, she’s coming around, rarely missing a day,” he says.

The move to Rockhill also helped Burton rebuild his relationship with Tanya Lafferty. She moved back shortly after he and Lacey did, and together they worked on the issues that had destabilized them. “We learned how to communicate better, how to have a discussion rather than shouting and fighting,” she says. And just as important, “Lacey loved it,” Tanya says. She got used to being Lacey’s mom with help from the Rockhill family support workers. Meanwhile, Burton worked on his parenting skills. “I’m going to be a decent parent, if not perfect. I can manage now instead of saying, ‘the hell with it,’” he says. They’ve come full circle with the issues that destabilized them.

“The staff have been really great,” says Tanya. We learned how to budget, we did the Thursday cooking program, and now we’re back on our feet financially,” Tanya says, listing the accomplishments of the last 18 months. She continued her work with a local hotel, while Burton got a job with the day shelter for homeless people. “Without Rockhill we may not

have made it,” she says.

“We’re ready to move on now, and let another family come in. A lot of good things happened here,” says Burton. “I’m not the person I was; I can do this.” Tanya echoes that assessment. “We’re more mature and more independent.”

Their next move is as a family, to Edmonton “I want to study Culinary Arts at NAIT, get my Red Seal certification and open my own business,” says Tanya. She’s dreaming of a bakery that serves bannock and butter tarts. Now the family has a solid foundation, the sky is the limit.



# YWCA Yellowknife Mission

YWCA Yellowknife exists to increase the well-being and independence of people, particularly women.



## Board Leadership

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## Staff Leadership Team

Lyda Fuller, Executive Director

Sherri Allen, Accountant (replaced by Don Babey January 2010)

Florence Peddle, Director of Child & Youth Services

Julie Green, Director of Community Relations

Kate Wilson, Director of Housing

Diane Jamieson, Director of Social Programs

Jillian Tobin, Finance Manager



# Message from Executive Director Lyda Fuller and Board President Vicki Tompkins

It's been almost three years since a coalition of women's organizations published a pan-territorial study of homelessness. The report titled *You Just Blink and it Can Happen* concludes that "all women in the north are at risk of homelessness because just a small change in their circumstances can jeopardize the fragile structure of their lives that allows them to meet their needs." The report published in November 2007 estimated that up to a thousand women in the Northwest Territories were already homeless. There's no reason to think that number has gone down.

Many families who come to YWCA Yellowknife's emergency and transitional housing program are living that "just blink" moment. Maybe they left an abusive partner, an overcrowded family home or decided they just couldn't spend any more time separated from their children. Many who come to Rockhill say they have nowhere else to go.

Affordable housing is a scarce commodity in Yellowknife. More than half of families with an income under \$40,000 are overspending on housing, meaning they spend more than 30 per cent of their gross income on rent. CMHC is forecasting lower apartment vacancy rates and higher rents for the year to come. That means families will inevitably have less money for other essentials such as food and clothing.

Many families face an impossible choice: either pay the rent and not have enough money for food, or pay for food and not have enough for rent. Single income families and low wage earners struggle continuously.

Last year Rockhill housed 72 families who needed a new start. The emergency and transitional housing program is one of a kind service for families in Yellowknife and across all three territories. Families say it works. They are able to resolve issues that made them homeless and they are ready to move on.

The need for our service continues to grow – we have a substantial waiting list for the suites at Rockhill. We house more two-parent families than we used to. We would like to offer more housing, but we haven't found a building to buy at a reasonable price where we ourselves can make ends meet by charging affordable rent.

Every day, our staff hears about the barriers families face to keep themselves housed. Sometimes housing for the entire family is put at risk because they take in an extended family member, usually a child. Or because they didn't realize that "extra" money from something like their tax return couldn't be spent to meet a long-awaited need - because it would be

deducted from their next income support cheque. The money is gone for some other legitimate cause – but now the rent is in arrears. They lose their homes, become homeless and the cycle begins again.

Meanwhile, the emergency and transitional housing program at Rockhill also lives a *You Just Blink and it Can Happen* existence. It runs a deficit each year, despite careful management. The bulk of the revenue comes from rents paid by clients, and by our administration offices which relocated back to Rockhill last November. The territorial government funds five emergency suites in winter. The remainder of the budget comes from donations, amounting to about \$35,000 last year. Our biggest expense is the small staff contingent for the program, and we believe they are worth every cent for the help they provide families to make the changes that result in independence (see **Kate's story on page 12**). Costs – especially repairs and maintenance, heat and electricity – continue to rise.

YWCA Yellowknife is investing in housing families and through our new "Turn Up the Heat on Homelessness" fund raising campaign, Yellowknifers have generously joined the cause (see **the list of donors on pages 18-19**). Staff are also

looking at ways to literally turn down the heat at Rockhill, by assessing relatively inexpensive changes that will save money on heat and lights.

Housing is a right described in Article 25 of the UN's Declaration of Universal Human Rights. But in the north, affordable housing is more often a privilege. We need to work together with our community partners to stabilize the emergency and transitional housing program we have, and expand it where possible. We need to take action on homelessness and give families in the north a new start.

  
Lyda Fuller

  
Vicki Tompkins

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# Homelessness: the Numbers

Homelessness is a reality in Yellowknife. About five per cent of Yellowknife's population stayed in a shelter at some point in 2008, according to the Yellowknife Homelessness Coalition's report card for that year. That is a total of **936** people.

- **394** single men • **200** single women
- **43** youth age 0 to 25 • **161** families

## Visible vs. Invisible homelessness

Single people are often the visibly homeless, living on the street, staying overnight in temporary shelters or staying in places not meant for human habitation, like cars.

Homeless families are more often invisible. They may be able to stay together as temporary guests of family or friends. Or they may have to split up, with children staying in separate houses. They may be in relationships of convenience to ensure they have a place to stay, or they may be afraid to leave relationships that are abusive because they do not have anywhere else to live.

In addition to families who are now homeless, there are others who are at high risk of losing their place to stay. That is because they are overspending on housing, meaning they are spending more than 30 per cent of their gross income on shelter. Approximately 14 per cent of Yellowknife's population is classified as low-income (gross household income less than \$40,000). Of the people in this group, two thirds are overspending on shelter. With CMHC (Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporate) forecasting rent for a one bedroom at \$1,250 and \$1,500 for a two bedroom, it is not hard to see how the loss of a job or relationship could jeopardize a family's housing. Or families may stay in conditions where they are overcrowded or where the house does not meet health and safety standards because they can't afford anything else.

# What YWCA Yellowknife Offers Homeless Families

An emergency and transitional housing program at the Rockhill apartments

YWCA Yellowknife has leased Rockhill from the government since 1997. The building has 30 suites for rent.

Five emergency units are available for families who would otherwise be homeless. Tenants in these units do not pay rent, and they can stay for up to three months. Staff provides support for families to address the issues that provoked the housing crisis. As well, staff helps tenants build up a damage deposit or develop re-payment plans where rent is owed elsewhere.

## **YWCA housing programs for families are unique in the north.**

Some tenants require more time, and move into our transitional housing programs to better support their efforts at independence. Others move directly into public housing or private market housing. Tenants at Rockhill pay \$1150 per month for a one-bedroom suite or \$1350 per month for a two-bedroom suite. Some clients have their rent subsidized by income support, while others have paid work. Tenants work with staff on developing good tenancy records, acquiring parenting skills and otherwise stabilizing their families. Families in transitional housing usually stay for about a year.



*"I learned how to become independent by living here and I'm forever grateful to these guys at the YWCA."*  
- Darlene Porter, former resident

# Who YWCA Yellowknife Helps



Most families who come to the emergency and transitional housing program are of aboriginal or Inuit ancestry. They originally come from a small community in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut with a population of fewer than 1500 people. Families have to be living in Yellowknife to apply at Rockhill.

Most families refer themselves to Rockhill. For the year ending March 31, 2010, Rockhill housed 49 families in transitional apartments, and 23 families in emergency suites. About half are single mom families, a few are single dads, while the rest are couples with kids. Children outnumber adults at Rockhill, and most are under five years old.

**"It's so comfortable and so secure. There are counsellors if you need to talk - they are right there."**

**- Barb Eylon**

# Why Clients Choose

## YWCA Yellowknife's Emergency and Transitional Housing Program

- family support workers provide counselling and skill development.
- a safe place to live with security staff on site at night and on the weekends.
- affordable rent (by Yellowknife standards)
- an apartment fully furnished with donated furniture and household items which families take with them when they leave
- access to a clothing exchange and food donations

"It was too crowded at my mum's house. I wanted to live here - it was my first choice."

- Patricia Mantla,  
former resident



# What YWCA Yellowknife Has to Offer

## Our Staff are Our Strength

Kate Wilson's larger than life presence fills the room with energy and enthusiasm. She has been director of YWCA Yellowknife's Emergency and Transitional Housing Program since 1999. Rockhill is the place families from across the North come to make a new start. And Kate is the person to help them do just that.

Rockhill is so much more than an apartment building. "We're not just providing housing," explains

Kate, "we provide support." That's important to families, many of whom arrive in crisis because they have nowhere to live. Support can take many forms from making sure basic needs for food and clothing are met to resolving issues that arise with other service providers.

Kate and her two housing support workers sit down with a newly-arrived family and help them set goals. First and foremost is to help families develop good tenancy records during their year-long stay. That may involve helping them to budget to pay off money owing to other landlords, and to save for a deposit. Or it may involve educating people about being good neighbours by being quiet at night. "It's about sitting down and working with them to understand their rights and responsibilities - and those of the landlord," she says.

Staff also provide programs that respond to families' needs. Offerings include literacy, parenting, life skills and good nutrition. "People often need help to figure out how to eat well on a budget," says Kate. "We try to incorporate cooking into everything we do so they know what nutrition looks like and how to do it."

**Our staff make a difference, every day.**



Kate's goal is to provide a supportive place to live so that people grow. Perhaps it's helping to enrol parents or their kids in school or getting counselling. Perhaps it's advocating for a tenant who is trying to access income support, or re-establish themselves after ending an abusive relationship. "I want them to look back at this building, and say 'this is where my journey started.'"

### Who Pays for this Service?

- In 2009/10 it cost **\$717,414** to operate Rockhill.
- GNWT provides the building free of charge on a ten year renewable lease.
- YWCA paid **\$65,699** for heat and **\$55,742** for electricity in 2009/10.
- Tenants in transitional suites pay rent : **\$1,150/month** for a one bedroom; **\$1,350/month** for a two bedroom.
- GNWT pays for 5 to 7 emergency suites in winter months.



turn up the  
**HEAT** on  
**HOMELESSNESS**



In April 2010, YWCA Yellowknife teamed up with BHP Billiton Canada to take action on homelessness and give northern families a new start. BHP Billiton has pledged \$125,000 over the next three years to the emergency and transitional housing programs for families, starting with \$25,000 in 2010. Generous northerners more than matched that amount.

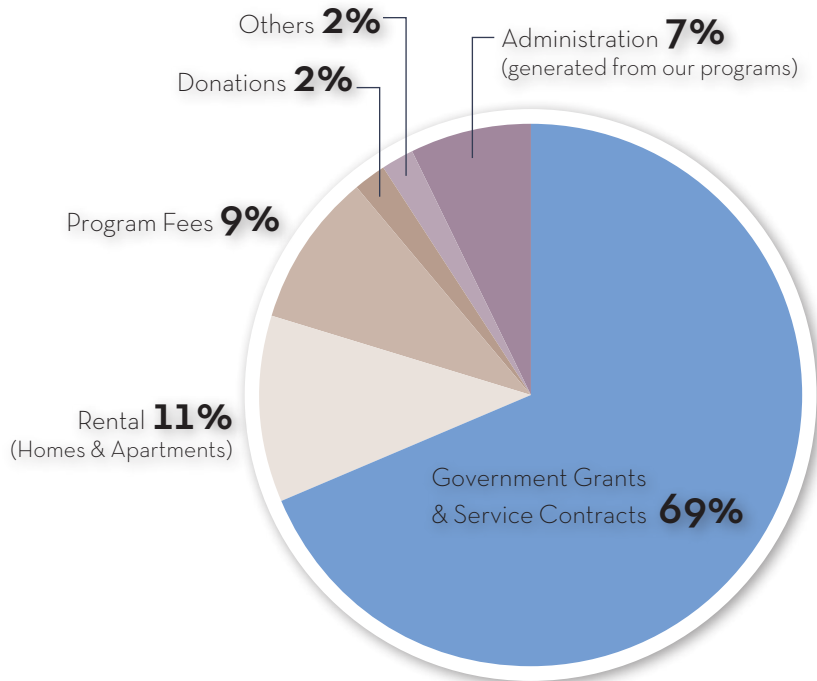
"It was a decision that took about ten minutes to make." BHP Billiton Canada's Deana Twissell on reviewing the YWCA Yellowknife Turn Up the Heat on Homelessness proposal.

**\$125,000.00 Pledge from BHP**

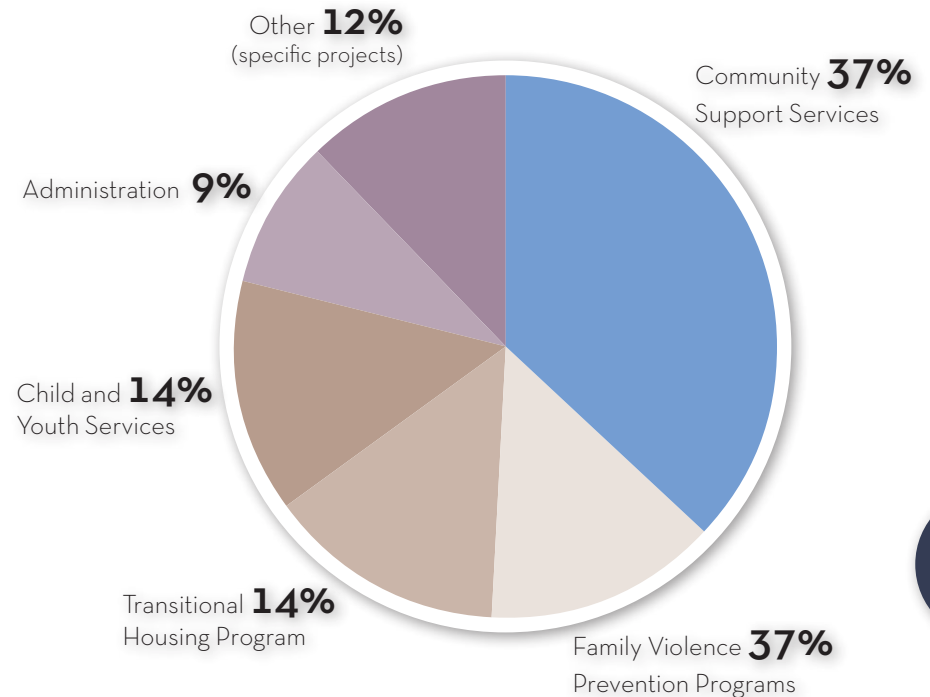
**"It was a decision that took about ten minutes to make."**

# YWCA Yellowknife Revenue and Expenses

## 2009/10 Revenue



## 2009/10 Expenses



# In 2009-2010, YWCA Yellowknife Helped in Other Ways

## Community Support Services

YWCA Yellowknife owns five homes, providing long-term supportive housing to 20 adults with developmental disabilities and/or mental health issues, and subcontracts care in a family home for four others.

Outreach support services helped 14 adults with disabilities remain in their homes in the community.

A specially-converted van provides clients with physical disabilities an easy way to get out and about.

We invested in furnaces, double walled oil tanks, and new hot water heaters for each of our homes.



## Alison McAteer House Family Violence Shelter

Alison McAteer House is a 12 bed facility that provides a safe and anonymous location for women and children fleeing violence. In the year ending March 31, 2010, 302 women and children stayed at AMH.

The crisis line received 1481 calls for crisis or ongoing support.

Staff helped 72 women apply for emergency protection orders that keep abusers at bay; most were granted.

There is now a full-time on-site manager to increase support for women, as well as an overflow room to better meet needs when we exceed our bed capacity.

Status of Women Canada is funding a program to develop and pilot safety options for women who live in isolated communities without an RCMP presence.

## Child and Youth Services

YWCA Yellowknife After School Programs operate in schools throughout Yellowknife and served 205 families in 2009-2010

Project Child Recovery helped 335 children cope with violence in their lives through sessions held in schools in Yellowknife or Behchoko.

### **Girls Programs**

GirlSpace is a free, weekly after school program for girls ages 8 to 13 to build leadership, self-esteem and empowerment. 58 girls enrolled in GirlSpace in 2009-2010.

The Power of Being A Girl conference is held annually in October during the YWCA Week Without Violence. About 60 girls from grades 6 to 8 attend.

The Taiga Adventure Camp offers summer camps that develop leadership skills for pre-teen and teenage girls. In the summer of 2009, 60 girls attended two sessions of the camp in Fort Smith.

### **Outreach to Iqaluit**

YWCA Yellowknife continues to support the creation of an independent YWCA in Iqaluit through YWCA Canada's Northern Extension Program. YWCA Agvvik operates a newly-renovated 12 bed homeless shelter for women, with

or without children as well as a 21 bed shelter for women and children experiencing family violence.

### **Coming up!**

YWCA Yellowknife will be hosting the Annual Membership Meeting of YWCA Canada and its 33 member associations in June 2011 at the Explorer Hotel.



# Our Thanks

to our Funders and Donors who have helped us to increase

## Funders

NWT Housing Corporation  
Yellowknife Health and Social Services  
GNWT Department of Justice  
GNWT Victim Assistance Fund  
GNWT Department of Health  
and Social Services  
GNWT Education Culture  
and Employment

## Donors

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the well-being women, girls and families who come through our door

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Ann Lynagh  
Colin MacKay  
Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Pipeline LP  
Brenda Macleod  
Hayley Maddeaux-Young  
and Chris Maddeaux  
Louise Marcinkoski  
Marks Work Warehouse  
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Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op  
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Our apologies to anyone  
we have missed.

giving families a new start

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[www.ywcanwt.ca](http://www.ywcanwt.ca)



4904-54th Avenue, Box 1679  
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P3

T 867.920.2777 F 867.873.9406