



Positive Women's Network

Action and Leadership on Women and HIV/AIDS

April 4, 2017

Dear members & friends,

It is with mixed emotions that we share this important news with you. After extensive discussion and careful consideration, the Positive Women's Network (PWN) Board of Directors has decided to close its doors. We have made this difficult decision in response to the shifting landscape of HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) services, especially as these relate to women, as well as the challenge in sustaining long-term funding to run PWN's programs. Although we are sad to say goodbye, we are proud of our accomplishments and the evolution of women's HIV movements.

For the past 25 years, PWN has challenged gender-based health inequities for women living with HIV and HCV. We responded to a health crisis in the early 1990s to provide much-needed services that made a tremendous difference in the lives of women living with and affected by HIV. With regard to PWN's legacy, it is important to remember that PWN was boldly established at a time when the wider response and action to the HIV epidemic was not focused on women; over the course of its history, PWN emerged as a national leader and advocate for women's HIV care, education and services.

Since its founding more than two decades ago, PWN has led initiatives to promote women-centred health, public education, advocacy, and research on HIV and HCV. We have recognized the ongoing effects of colonization on the history and experiences of Indigenous women and have applied the principles of GIPA and MIWA to our work. By responding to the needs of individual women through women-specific services and working together as a community of women with shared values and goals, our impact has been phenomenal. The most recent statistics from the BC Centre for Disease Control report that the rate of new HIV diagnoses among women has decreased and women are living longer with HIV. We know that PWN and the incredible work of long-time, committed staff members, volunteers, and peers contributed to these good-news statistics and to other important dimensions of women's well-being that are much more difficult to measure.

The Board would like to thank our current Executive Director, Donna Tennant, and former Executive Director, Marcie Summers, for their leadership. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to PWN's staff and volunteers for their years of service. Your dedication made real differences in the lives of so many women and families.

To our community partners and funders, thank you. Your support, partnership, and collaboration has certainly contributed to the legacy PWN will leave behind. We are grateful for the organizations, staff, and peers that will continue to provide care for women living with HIV and hepatitis C in British Columbia.

Most importantly, we would like to acknowledge our members. Without each and every one of you, this organization would not have evolved to be so impactful in British Columbia and beyond. Thank you for supporting PWN, accessing our services, becoming peer leaders, and committing to the vision that all women with HIV can receive care with dignity. Our staff will be available and will continue working with you to transition services to other agencies. Information about the services offered at partner organizations will also be posted on our website in the coming days.

Sincerely,

Positive Women's Network Board of Directors

Brittany Graham (chair), Carly Daoust, Heather Holroyd, Negar Hooshmand-Mozaffar & Patti Telford