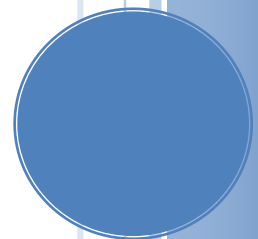


# FINDING THE HIGHER GROUND:

*Exploring the Need to Establish Secure Shelter,  
Transition Housing and Support Services for Women  
and Children who are Escaping Domestic Violence in  
the Bow Valley*

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Submitted to the YWCA Banff

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## 1. Introduction

The YWCA Banff has been providing housing and social services in the Bow Valley community for over one hundred years. Its programs and services are grounded in the YWCA mission of empowering women, girls and the community through leadership development, advocacy and best practices. YWCA Banff has now embarking on a project to improve its services and facilities in order to more effectively address the issues of domestic violence or abuse in the Bow Valley. Community members and local statistics suggest that more work needs to be done locally to assist women and children and that no one agency can do this alone. YWCA Banff mission, history and expertise makes it well-positioned to engage service providing community to work together to address these issues. YWCA Banff has initiated a consulting process with the local community members representing public, not-for-profit and private sectors, as well as a process of gathering best practice and needs assessment information.

Shortly after YWCA Banff engaged in the needs assessment process it was informed that it was successful in receiving a Family and Community Safety Program grant to develop a community response to the issue of sexual assault in the Bow Valley. Although some discussion took place with respect to integrating the sexual assault initiative with this needs assessment work, it was decided, in order to maintain the specific project focus, that the primary focus of this document will be on domestic violence or abuse. This report can be expanded to include considerations for sexual assault services and a response plan, once that project is underway.

The YWCA does not approach this project with a specific model in mind, except to say that there is a need to improve services and facilities that the YWCA currently provides for women and children experiencing domestic violence or abuse. The organization has been limited by the shelter functionality and location, lack of appropriate resources to support children in the shelter, and limited resource capacity to recruit and maintain staff with needed expertise.

The YWCA would like for the community to consider a development of a facility or service that can provide safe and secure temporary accommodation and supports for women and children fleeing domestic violence in the Bow Valley. The result would be an array of services suitable, responsive, secure and flexible to address the full continuum of needs of these women and children.

This document summarizes the information gathered during the first, exploratory phase of the needs assessment project. The information from this document will support the community discussion about different models for moving forward. Model implementation phase will follow, with a particular focus on long-term sustainability and service providing community engagement and ownership.

### 1.1 History and Description of YWCA Banff

The YWCA of Banff has been the leading resource for women and their families fleeing domestic violence and for providing safe, affordable housing for Bow Valley community members for over 100 years. The YWCA of Calgary first began operating a mountain retreat in Banff in 1913. Guided by the YWCA National mandate, the YWCA Banff officially opened a Banff Chalet to provide holiday accommodation for working women in 1912. In the 1930s the YWCA started operating the Chalets in Banff, Lake Louise and Field. In the late 1950s the Chalets were remodeled to switch to year round accommodation.

In 1987, YWCA Banff acquired and renovated the old Banff Mineral Springs Hospital for the purpose of providing affordable co-ed accommodation and establishing a community resource centre. The building was awarded to the YWCA for one dollar because of the YWCA's successful 75 year history in housing and social services. The organization was under the auspices of the Calgary YWCA until 1995, when it became autonomous at the asset transfer price of \$1 million. As part of this expansion, the shelter started around this time and has since evolved to the Bow Valley Women's Emergency Shelter (BVWES).

YWCA continues to operate out of the original hospital location at 102 Spray Ave. Its funding sources are varied and include private as well as government funders and donors. The organization continues to evolve and is now structured based on their three pillars: Programs and Services, Residence and the YWCA Banff Hotel Social Enterprise, as briefly described below:

1. Programs and Services

- Counseling and support services for individuals who are experiencing or fleeing emotional, physical sexualized or other types abuse in their homes or are victims of sexual assault;
- Emergency shelter for women and children in Bow Valley leaving or fleeing domestic violence or abuse;
- Counseling for individuals and couples who are looking to build healthy relationships; and,
- Community outreach, awareness and prevention programming.

2. YWCA Banff Residence

- The YWCA provides permanent affordable housing with 120 residents living onsite year-round. Residents are provided with a secure furnished bedroom, private or shared bathrooms, as well as shared common facilities such as kitchens, lounges and television rooms and complementary high speed internet. The residence provides co-ed as well as female-only accommodation. Average waiting times for the residence vary from 1-3 months based on seasonal demand.

3. YWCA Banff Hotel Social Enterprise

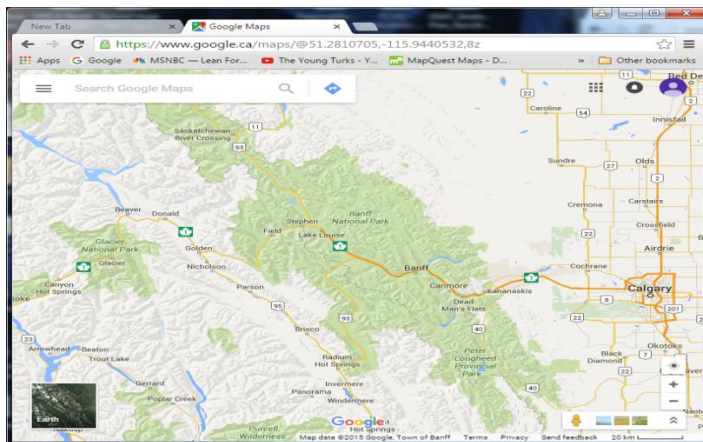
- YWCA Banff runs a small hotel and the revenues from this business are reinvested to support community programs, affordable residence and to cover operations including salaries. The facility includes 42 private hotel rooms and 80 beds in shared accommodation. Two large meeting rooms provide space for meetings, weddings and small conferences. The Mountain Café offers the Food & Beverage services to support the hotel. The social enterprise model allows the organization flexibility to respond to community needs and align with the YWCA mandate to provide a continuum of services to the Bow Valley community.

As it moves forward with this project YWCA Banff would like to capitalize on the expertise it has developed in the supporting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault as well as providing temporary shelter, counseling supports, short term accommodation and permanent housing in the Bow Valley.

## 2. The Bow Valley – Description, Trends and Services

YWCA Banff services support residents in the Bow Valley which stretches from Kananaskis Village to Lake Louise and includes towns of Banff and Canmore and Municipal District of Bighorn # 8. The proposed project will meet the needs of residents in those areas and possibly other neighboring communities, including Cochrane, Cremona, Didsbury, Olds, Sundre, Water Valley, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer, Calgary, Strathmore, Lethbridge and High River.

Figure 1. Map of the Bow Valley



### 2.1 Population Statistics

As shown in Table 1 below, Bow Valley is home to 23,950 permanent residents. With addition of non-permanent residents (those who have lived in the area less than 10 years) the population increases to almost 30,000 and to over 50,000 if some of the other surrounding towns are included.<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. Population of the Bow Valley Catchment Area

Location	Permanent Population	Non-Permanent Residents	Description	Census Year
Town of Banff	8,421	965		2014
Town of Canmore	13,077	3,890	Includes Three Sisters Mountain Village	2014
Municipal District of Bighorn #8	1,252		Benchlands, Dead Man's Flats, Exshaw, Harvie Heights, Lac des Arcs, Ranchlands, Ghost River Country	2011
The Village of Lake Louise	1,200			2011

<sup>1</sup> Banff Lake Louise Tourism. 2014 Annual Report;  
Alberta Government (2014). Municipal Affairs 2014 Population List.

Bow Valley is a resort area and, therefore, welcomes a significant number of visitors, particularly during high peak seasons. For example, in 2014/2015 fiscal year there were 3,609,647 unique visitors to the Banff National Park and this number is expected to increase by up to 15% in the 2015/2016 fiscal year.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 Population Trends and Issues<sup>3</sup>

- Anyone who lives in Banff National Park (this includes the town of Banff and village of Lake Louise) is subject to Eligible Residency Requirements, which restrict occupancy to eligible residents as defined in National Park Regulations. Essentially, this is a ‘need to reside’ requirement which restricts ownership or renting of property to those who are living and working full-time in the area, sometimes creating a situation where people cannot obtain a place to live without work or find work without a place to live.
- Affordable housing is a significant issue in the area, since supply is limited; resulting in the high cost of housing and living in general (Canmore has the highest cost of living in Alberta).
- The area, and particularly Canmore, is still recovering from the damage experienced as a result of 2013 flood, as a sizable number of the population is still living in temporary housing, further adding to housing pressures in the Bow Valley.
- There are differences among Banff and Canmore permanent and temporary population trends. For example, in Canmore, proportion of long-term residents has been increasing. This has not been the case in Banff, where the growth of long-term population is restricted by Parks Canada to its current footprint and a population cap. Instead, Banff experiences a continuous influx of short-term residents and visitors to the area, the latter continuing to increase from previous years by 7% to 12% depending on the month of the year.
- Cost of living is higher in the area than elsewhere in Alberta, as is the proportion of low income residents particularly in Banff. This, combined with low vacancy rates, results in almost 60% of residents in Banff renting rather than owning their own house, and over two-thirds relying on public transportation rather than a private vehicle.
- Remote locations of areas such as Lake Louise and MD of Bighorn create isolation and transportation issues – although transportation is also an issue in Canmore and Banff where most people do not own a vehicle.
- Unemployment rates are generally lower here than in the rest of Alberta, partially influenced by the Eligible Residency Requirement in Banff, use of Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFP) and a sizable proportion of Canmore residents commuting to work in Banff or elsewhere in the valley.
- As a result of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, the area has seen a significant influx of newcomers requiring resettlement support. For example, newcomer population in Banff has grown by 16% (to 27%) between 2006 and 2011, and includes a large number of newcomers from Philippines. This growth is expected to slow because of federal government discontinuing of the TFP program.

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<sup>2</sup> Banff Lake Louise Tourism. 2014 Annual Report.

<sup>3</sup> Documentation supporting information in this section includes:

- Municipal District of Bighorn No. 8.. Community Master Plan, Revised October 2013
- Town of Banff (2015). Council Four-Year Strategic Priorities Summary.
- Town of Banff Family & Community Support Services (2014). Banff Community Social Assessment.
- Town of Canmore (2014). 2013-2015 Strategic Plan.
- Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley (2015). Canmore Community Monitoring Program. 2014 Final Report. Town of Canmore.

- Aboriginal population proportion is comparatively low (at about 3%), with most of the Aboriginal population in the area living on the neighboring Morley reserve.
- The population in the area, particularly in Banff and the non-permanent population in Canmore, are on average 5 years younger than the rest of Alberta and the largest demographic in Banff is the 20 to 29 age group. The preponderance of the younger population in the area, combined with the resort designation contributes to higher prevalence of issues such as sexual assault, transiency etc., particularly in Banff and Lake Louise.
- Elder concerns, such as senior care, housing, transportation, support/isolation and elder abuse are also identified as issues in the area – more so in the smaller surrounding areas, such as Municipal District of Bighorn.
- Addictions and mental health concerns in Bow Valley are primarily related to isolation of residents living in the remote areas. Compared to the experience of other smaller locations in Alberta, there is good access to mental health and addictions services, particularly in the towns of Banff and Canmore.

## 2.3 Related Services in the Area

YWCA Banff is seeking to build on existing services to support women and children fleeing domestic violence. These types of services may include shelters, affordable or transitional housing, as well as victim support and outreach. This section describes services that are currently delivered in the Bow Valley that are most relevant to supporting women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

### Domestic Violence Services and Supports

- The Bow Valley Women's Emergency Shelter (BVWES), operated by YWCA Banff, has one room with two beds and can house a family or as many 2 individuals for a period of up to three weeks. On occasion, in an overflow situation, the YWCA has been able to secure up to three additional rooms to provide a safe space for women and children. YWCA Banff also provides support and counseling services for individuals who are experiencing or have experienced emotional, physical or sexualized or other types of abuse in a domestic violence situation or individuals who have experienced sexual assault. YWCA also provides counseling for individuals and couples who are looking to build healthy relationships.
- Bow Valley Victim Services Association (BVVSA) is located at the Banff RCMP office and provides support, assistance and information to victims of crime and trauma in the Bow Valley. In Canmore, the BVVSA uses office space at the Alberta Health Services Addiction Services' office. BVVSA also had an agreement with the Canmore Rotary House that allowed it, until recently, to use a two-bedroom unit in Canmore as emergency accommodation for victims of crime or trauma.
- Other than BVVSA and YWCA Banff there are no other services that specifically support families experiencing domestic violence. One possible exception are the groups for domestic violence offenders delivered by YWCA Calgary in Cochrane.
- When the facilities in Bow Valley are unable to meet the demand, the women and children fleeing domestic violence may access a local motel or hotel or shelters and services in Calgary, Strathmore, High River, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer or Lethbridge that are located at least 2 hours away, if there is availability, which is rare.

## Affordable and Transitional Housing

### *Banff*

Town of Banff Housing Strategy<sup>4</sup> describes an undersupply of affordable rental housing and that the shortage of affordable and appropriate rental housing appears to be the town's most pressing need. The study predicted that Banff would have a shortfall of between 455 and 730 units by 2022 if the current trend in population growth continues. Main options for transitional and affordable housing in the area include the following:

- Banff International Hostel provides short-term and transitional accommodation through dorm rooms, 4 to 8 bed private rooms and single bed rooms. There are also two additional commercial hostels in Banff.
- YWCA Banff Residence provides permanent affordable accommodation with 120 residents living onsite year-round.
- The Banff YWCA hotel provides temporary short-term accommodation.
- Due to the shortage of land and housing in Banff, most employers provide some type of employee housing. Typically this also means that if someone quits or is fired from a job, they lose their housing.

### *Canmore*

The 2007-2010 inventory in the Canmore Housing Action Plan<sup>5</sup> counted a total of 145 affordable housing units in Canmore – considered insufficient to address the growing need in that town. The plan speaks to the need for the development of “Perpetually Affordable Housing” including an inventory of developable lands, developing partnerships and alternate construction methods. The plan also addresses opportunities for provision of “social housing”, primarily focusing on exploration of possibilities and resources.

Canmore hostel (The Hostel Bear) is currently the only facility in Canmore that provides short-term, affordable accommodation: it sleeps up to 170 guests with 9 private rooms and provides short-term accommodation/transitional housing generally targeting the new arrivals to the community. This is a commercial facility.

### *Other Options*

- Bow Valley Regional Housing provides affordable housing in the Bow Valley area that is based on income.
- All housing in Lake Louise is staff accommodation, with the exception of a small Co-op Housing program that has approximately 20 units.

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<sup>4</sup> Community Housing Strategy Committee (2014). Town of Banff Housing Strategy.

<sup>5</sup> Town of Canmore (2011). Comprehensive Housing Action Plan (CHAP) 2011.



## Related Services and Supports<sup>6</sup>

### *Banff*

- Town of Banff Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) provide information and referrals, Family School Liaison, Community Development and programs for 18 to 30 year olds (e.g., BanffLIFE, Court Support Program);
- Banff Urgent Mental Health at the Banff hospital and Banff outpatient Addiction and Mental Health Services help address mental health and addiction needs;
- Childcare is provided at the Banff Childcare Centre, Banff Out of School Club operated by the Town of Banff; and Banff Preschool.
- Limited and short-term financial supports are provided for those who qualify through Alberta Works and the “BRRR” fund administered by the Banff Homelessness to Housing Coalition; additional financial supports are also available through Town of Banff Affordability Programs (e.g., subsidized transit pass, recreation programs); and,
- Banff Food Bank is open one day per week and closed through the summer.

### *Canmore*

- Town of Canmore FCSS provides services for children and families (e.g., counseling, Parenting after Separation and Parent Conversation), general services (e.g., information and referral, counseling), and settlement services;
- Alberta Health Services, Canmore Area Office provides individual, group, and family counseling for the general public, individuals and families; mental health services are also provided via a 7-day/week walk-in and urgent mental health program operating out of the Canmore Hospital;
- Financial supports are provided through a varied array of provincial and national programs which are available to qualifying individuals, usually including social assistance payments; and,
- Childcare is provided by the Canmore Community Daycare and Mountain Munchkins Daycare; there is also a preschool and five licensed day homes.

### *Services Available Across the Bow Valley*

- Town of Banff FCSS Settlement Services in partnership with the Town of Canmore help address settlement needs of the newcomers to Bow Valley; Bow Valley Immigration Partnership has developed a strategy focusing on Organizational Strength, Education and Learning, Employment, Social Integration, Civic and Political Participation and Housing;
- Bow Valley Food Bank provides emergency food assistance to individuals and families experiencing a financial crisis in Canmore, Exshaw, Seebe, Dead Man’s Flats, Lac Des Arcs, Harvie Heights and Kananaskis;
- Bow Valley Parent Link provides services for families with children 0 to 6, including weekly drop-ins in Canmore, Banff and Exshaw, and including family support and counseling, as well as relationship counseling. There are also many other services for children in the area, including both pre-school and school-age supports; and,
- There are a number of churches in the area of many different denominations that provide an important contribution to the services and supports for families in the Bow Valley.

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<sup>6</sup> Town of Banff, Town of Canmore (year unknown). Bow Valley Community Resource Directory.

### *Other Areas*

- Outside of some services for seniors with transportation or paperwork needs, MD of Bighorn has no formal services and the residents are directed to access services in Canmore or Cochrane;
- Local support in Lake Louise is provided through Lake Louise Medical Clinic. For any other supports the residents usually access services in Banff;
- The ski hills provide childcare on a seasonal basis; and,
- The Morley reserve also has a 20-bed shelter.

### Community Committees

YWCA Banff has now engaged in a consulting process with the local community members representing public, not-for-profit and private sectors. The intention is to build on the good work that has already been done in the community and YWCA will seek to leverage existing community initiatives and committees in this effort. Key community committees and initiatives in the area include:

- Homeless to Housing Coalition (H2HC) is a group of local agencies and organizations that addresses emergency housing issues in Banff with members including the Full Gospel Church, Banff Park Church, Town of Banff FCSS, Alberta Health Services, The Job Resource Centre and YWCA Banff;
- Banff Housing Corporation (BHC) assists Banff residents obtain home ownership in the Town of Banff;
- Community Collaboration Network is comprised of representation from YWCA Banff, Whyte Museum, Mineral Springs Hospital, Banff Community Foundation and Canmore Arts Place. This is an informal group that meets to address collective issues facing community social profit organizations;
- Banff Lake Louise Hospitality Association (BLLHA): along with monthly meetings of the senior Hospitality leaders in the Banff, the BLLHA has a Human Resource Committee that meets regularly to discuss issues in the Bow Valley. Partners include BanffLife, Banff Heritage Tourism, Bow Valley Immigration Partnership, Settlement Services, Temporary Foreign Workers, Job Resource Centre, YWCA Banff;
- The Association of Mountain Parks Protection & Enjoyment (AMPPE) advocates for balance between sustainable tourism, protection of ecological integrity and positive visitor experience in our mountain parks. AMPPE members include park users such as skiers, cyclists and hikers, municipalities, tour operators, restaurants, accommodation providers, retailers and business firms; and,
- An Interagency Group is organized by Town of Canmore FCSS and Town of Banff FCSS departments. It meets once a month and sends out a weekly email newsletter. The group membership includes most of the agencies in the Bow Valley. The main purpose of the Group is to share information and this is accomplished by individual agency updates or by bringing in speakers to present on various topics of interest to the members.

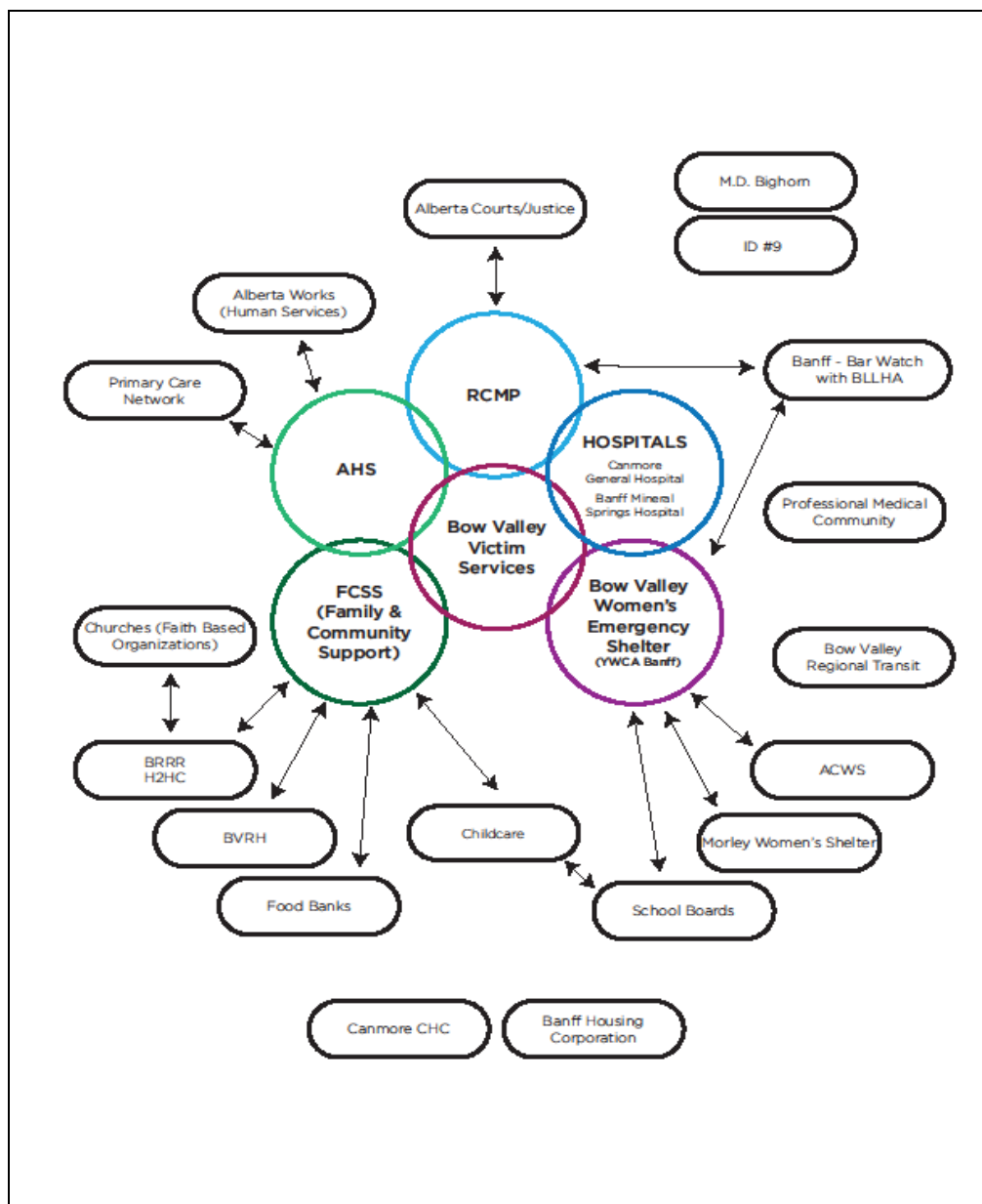
### The Services Map

The services map below visually illustrates the different services and the interactions that exist in the Bow Valley service providing community, specifically from the perspective of supporting women and children experiencing domestic violence (definitions for the abbreviations are provided in Attachment A). As can be seen from the map, there are a number of services that work closely together, establishing connections among different providers, and supporting wrap-around service delivery.

Bow Valley Victims Services (BVVSA), RCMP, Alberta Health Services, hospitals, FCSS and the Bow Valley Women's Emergency Shelter are the key service providers in responding to the issue of domestic violence, with BVVSA, in particular, playing a key role in the community, connecting those core service providers together.

There are also multiple other organizations that do not appear to be connected in the same way as the core service providing group. Some examples here include the Primary Care Network, Alberta Works, Churches, Housing Corporations, Bow Valley Transit, professional medical community as well as Alberta Courts and Justice services. These organizations are linked to one or two other service providers, and do not appear to be as well integrated as the core group described above.

Figure 2. Bow Valley Community Services Map



## Services Summary

The availability of services specifically related to addressing the issue of domestic violence is limited to the YWCA Banff and BVVSA, with the YWCA Banff being the only service provider with mandate specifically focusing on domestic violence.

The shelter space is in demand, as there are only two units plus several hostels supporting all of the Bow Valley. There are no facilities in the area with restricted access and other security features that help ensure the safety of women and children. Overall shortage of affordable housing in the area creates additional challenges for women who choose to leave their partners and speaks to the need for secure transitional or second-stage housing facility in the area. Other service sectors that may be lacking or where barriers or access issues are present include childcare and financial supports. As shown in the system map, there are also a number of services and supports that are not as well integrated into the service providing community as the core group of service providers.

On the other hand, there are several service providers in Banff and Canmore that work closely together and have a well-developed network of services and supports, primarily anchored in their respective FCSS offices and with BVVSA playing a key role in the community, bringing core service providers together in addressing the issue of domestic violence. The community also works well together through a network of community committees and initiatives. The access to mental health and addiction supports also appears to be good, better, in fact than similar size catchment areas elsewhere in Alberta.

### 3. The Issue of Domestic Violence

Violence against women has been recognized at both the national and international levels as a serious and ongoing impediment to gender equality and to women's human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>7</sup> It is commonly cited and recognized that one in three women is a victim of violence, and that Canada is no exception to this. In 2013 in Canada, the rate of homicides committed against a female intimate partner stood at 3.74 per million population. The rate of intimate partner homicide was 4.5 times higher for female victims than for male victims.<sup>8</sup>

Domestic abuse or violence is defined as any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship. It may include a single act of violence, or a number of acts forming a pattern of abuse through the use of assaultive and controlling behavior. The pattern of abuse may include: physical abuse; emotional abuse; psychological abuse; sexual abuse; criminal harassment (stalking); and threats to harm children, other family members, pets, and property.<sup>9</sup>

By comparison to the national numbers, Alberta has the second highest rate of self-reported spousal violence in the country. Specifically:<sup>10</sup>

- The percentage of self-reported spousal violence in Alberta was 7.6 percent, compared to 6.2 percent nationally;<sup>11</sup>
- A 2012 Alberta study determined that in every hour of every day, a woman is a victim of some form of violence by an ex-spouse or ex-partner;
- Between 2000 and 2010 there were 121 deaths of intimate partner victims in Alberta. These figures underestimate the actual rates, since cases where no charges have yet been laid, or where the case was unsolved or labeled as a suspicious death, are not included; and,
- Spousal victims were more likely than other victims to be first victimized as children with 48 per cent reporting they were physically assaulted before the age of 15 and 75 per cent reporting that they were first sexually victimized as a child.

The impacts of domestic violence are extensive and long-lasting. Domestic violence has significant and long-term physical and health impacts on victims as well as their children.<sup>12</sup> It is one of the main causes of homelessness among Canadian families.<sup>13</sup> The cost to Alberta taxpayers of addressing domestic violence exceeds \$ 1 billion in the last five years.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations, General Assembly (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. 85<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 20 December 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. (2011). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile: 2009 GSS victimization survey*(Catalogue no. 85-224-X). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Industry.

<sup>9</sup> Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, Alberta Crown Prosecution Service (2014). A Domestic Violence Handbook for Police Services and Crown Prosecutors in Alberta.

<sup>10</sup> Citations from: Alberta Government Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence and Bullying. (2012). Family violence hurts everyone: A framework to end family violence in Alberta Calgary, Alberta.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. (2011). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile: 2009 GSS victimization survey*(Catalogue no. 85-224-X). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Industry.

<sup>12</sup> Hoffart, I. (2014). Second Stage Shelter Project – Transitioning from Domestic Violence to Stability. Report for Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and the Canadian Women's Foundation.

<sup>13</sup> Ponic, P.& Jategaonkar, J. (2010). Surviving not Thriving: The Systemic Barriers to Housing for Women Leaving Violent Relationships. BC Non-Profit Housing Association. Vancouver, BC.

<sup>14</sup> Wells, L., Boodt, C., and Emery H. (2012). Preventing Domestic Violence in Alberta: A Cost Savings perspective. The School of Public Policy, 5(17).

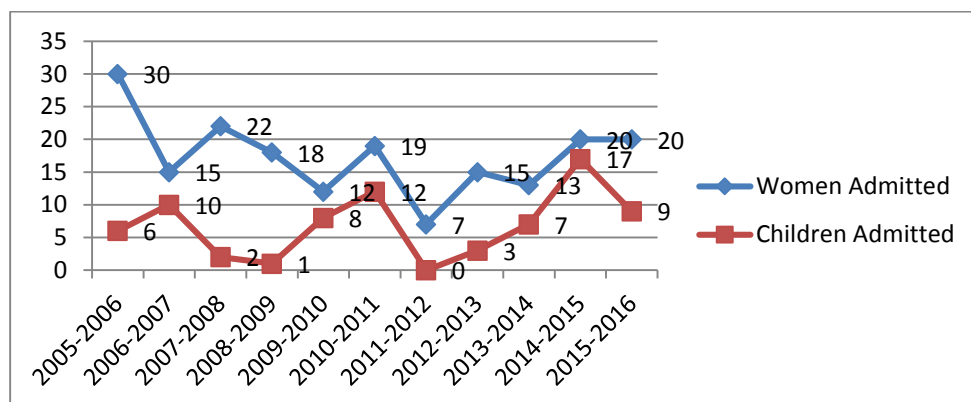
### 3.1 Domestic Violence Rates in the Bow Valley

A number of different organizations gather information about domestic violence rates in the Bow Valley. The information suggests that population in Bow Valley is not immune to the issue of domestic violence, and, according to some sources, the problem has been on the increase.

#### Bow Valley Women's Shelter

Bow Valley Women's Shelter operated by YWCA Banff, has one dedicated room and can house two women or one family for a period of about three weeks. When demand is high the shelter has been able to put up as many as four women at the same time by finding other inventory. The information gathered by the shelter indicates that the number of admissions has generally been on the increase since 2011-12 fiscal year – from 7 to 29 women and children in 2015-16 (see Figure 3 below). The number of nights women were housed also increased from 118 nights in 2011-12; 495 nights in 2014-15 and 428 in 2015-16. An additional 29 women living in the community also received counseling and support with respect to the issue of domestic violence in 2015-2016 fiscal year. YWCA has not been able to accommodate and has turned away 36 and 35 women respectively in 2014-15 and 42 in 2015-16.

Figure 3. Number of women and children admitted to the Bow Valley Women's Shelter

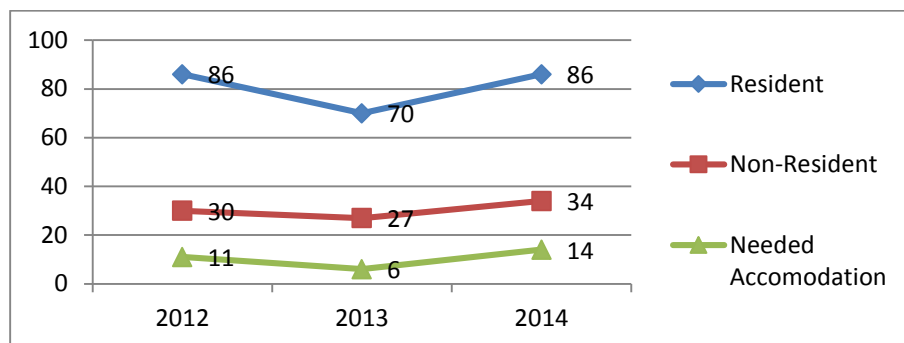


#### Bow Valley Victims Services Association (BVVSA)

BVSA provides support, assistance and information to victims of crime and trauma in the area. In 2014/2015 BVVSA provided support in 395 different occurrences. Domestic abuse has consistently been the most frequent occurrence responded to by the program (30% to 40%) with almost all files originating in Canmore or Banff.

BVVSA report suggests that the rate of domestic violence caseloads have trended upwards – from a low of 2.4 per 1000 of permanent residents in 1996/97 to a high of 6.2 in 2013/14. A detailed break-down of statistics (see Figure 4 below), shows an upward trend in all types of occurrences – Resident, Non-Resident and those who needed accommodation.

Figure 4. Domestic Violence Occurrences Addressed by BVVSA by Year

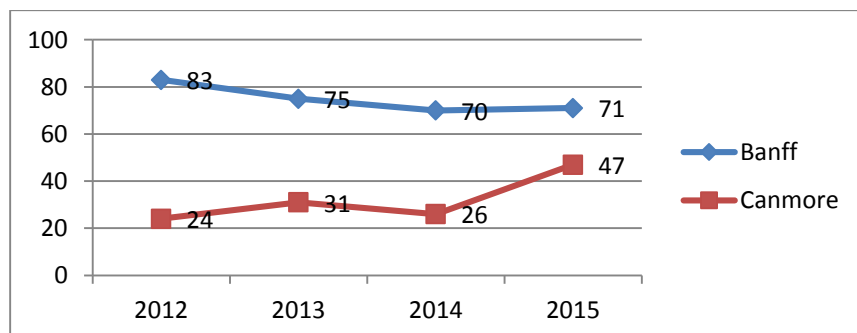


BVVSA also used a two-bedroom unit in Canmore as emergency accommodation for victims of crime or trauma. The types of occurrences when this accommodation was used over the past year included sudden deaths, natural disasters (e.g., flood), serious illnesses and incidents of domestic violence and sexual abuse. In the 2014/15 operational year, this unit was used a total of 89 nights by 32 separate individuals or families. In 2013/14 operational year, this unit was used for a total of 60 nights. Overall, between 2013 and 2015 of the 149 nights when the Canmore Rotary House was used by BVVSA, 81% of the nights were used by individuals affected by floods and 7% by individuals in abuse relationships. This option is no longer available to BVVSA.

#### RCMP

Banff and Canmore Royal Mounted Police provide policing services for the Bow Valley area. RCMP officers preserve the peace, uphold Canadian law and respond to noise bylaw infractions. Both detachments record the number of family violence calls they receive. When the officers respond, not all of these calls result in the laying of charges and court appearances. As can be seen from Figure 5, the number of family violence calls to Canmore detachment appears to have been increasing contrasted with calls to the Banff detachment (note, again that the information is to September 2015 and we are likely to see higher numbers when 2015 concludes). Additionally, the Probation office in the area reports 22 domestic violence files out of a total of 71 files (31%) on Probation caseload in December of 2015.

Figure 5. Number of Family Violence Calls to Banff and Canmore RCMP by Year



### Town of Banff, Settlement Services

Settlement Services is a program delivered by the Town of Banff, in partnership with Canadian Rockies Public Schools and our Lady of the Snows Catholic Academy and the Town of Canmore. The program works with permanent residents, live-in caregivers, refugees and temporary foreign workers who are living in the Bow Valley. The workers help identify settlement needs and help use clients' strengths and resources to achieve their settlement goals. The following summarizes relevant statistical information provided by the program.

- The program reports serving an increasing number of clients, from 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 – 297, 540, and 691 respectively and 376 clients to September of 2015/2016 fiscal year.
- Philippines consistently represents the top country of origin for a majority of clients.
- Over two-thirds of the clients originate from Banff.
- The Settlement Programmer's personal experience suggests that about 10% of these clients (or about 69 clients in the 2014/2015 fiscal year) are dealing with domestic violence and that this rate has been consistent over the years.

### Alberta Health Services (AHS)

Alberta Health Services, through its Canmore Area Office and Banff Hospital support women and children experiencing domestic violence, providing individual, group, and family counseling as well as mental health and addictions services. Although statistics with specific numbers served were not available, according to other service providers in the community, many individuals who receive domestic violence support and counseling also receive support from AHS, including children affected by domestic abuse. They also note that the number of mental health therapists employed by AHS has significantly increased over the past decade to better serve Bow Valley residents.

### Summary - Domestic Violence Statistics in Bow Valley

Most of the domestic violence statistics can only speak to instances that are reported to the authorities and, therefore, underestimate the real scope of the issue. Literature suggests that domestic violence is one of the most chronically underreported crimes. Only 25% of all physical assaults, 20% of all rapes, and 50% of all stalking perpetrated against females by their partners are reported to the police. For the small number of cases that do get reported, on average, a woman will be assaulted by her partner or ex-partner 35 times before reporting it to the police.<sup>15</sup>

The statistics summarized above suggest that domestic violence is an issue that needs to be addressed in the Bow Valley and there is some indication that the numbers may be increasing. Also, since domestic violence is often underreported, it is likely that the issue is larger than what is reflected in the numbers cited above. Several services in the Bow Valley that support women and children experiencing domestic violence work well together and some have grown in response to service demand (e.g., Alberta Health Services). None of those services, however, can safely and securely house women and children experiencing domestic violence.

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<sup>15</sup> National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2012. <http://www.ncadv.org/learn/statistics>



## 4. Domestic Violence Shelters

Wathen et al<sup>16</sup> paint a picture of a modern women's shelter and how it has evolved over time. Since their beginnings in 1973 as small and hidden safe spaces, domestic violence shelters have undergone a significant shift in what they look like and how they operate. They are now available across Canada's 10 provinces and 3 territories, becoming a key resource in protecting women from abusive partners. The shelters have expanded beyond secure accommodation to include an integrated array of services such as counseling, programs for children and parenting support, outreach for women who are not staying at the shelter, treatment groups for men, follow-up as well as public education and prevention programming. Shelters have also grown significantly in their capacity for accountability and data collection, having developed, in Alberta, for example, a shared database supporting informed quality improvement and program development process.

The shelters are no longer hidden places, but are well integrated into the community and partner closely with other community service providers, with their locations often known and supported by the surrounding community, and kept secure using an array of security measures and partnerships with local police departments (see Attachment B for pictures of one such shelter in one of the southern Alberta communities). The shelters have also broadened their missions to include advocacy to connect individual women and children with needed community services as well as focus on systemic advocacy and societal change through public awareness, policy development and community education and abuse prevention initiatives. There is now an integrated community of shelters internationally (Global Network of Women's Shelters), nationally (Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses), and provincially (Alberta Council of Women's Shelters). Through these networks, shelters have established a reciprocal community that facilitates open information exchange, best practices research, innovation, a unified voice on behalf of the abused women and children and access to facilities across the world to support women and children wherever they live and wherever they wish to go in order to escape abuse.<sup>17</sup>

There are over 40 shelters across Alberta providing safe shelter to women and children who are escaping violent relationships. Most of these shelters receive core funding from the provincial government, and many also rely on fundraising to supplement needed resources. These shelters support catchment areas that differ in size, location in Alberta, population demographics, shelter type (emergency or longer-term second-stage) and type of area (urban, rural or on-reserve). This section describes selected shelters from the perspective of funding, shelter logistics, as well as key service statistics. This discussion is intended to help inform YWCA Banff planning with respect to the array of services that may be needed to provide domestic violence services and supports in the Bow Valley.

### 4.1 Shelter Funding

Table 2 below lists shelters that serve catchment areas with population size similar to or smaller than the Bow Valley – including locations with the population of 25,000 or less. As can be seen from the table all of these shelters receive provincial funding for 6 up to 24 beds; as compared to the YWCA Banff shelter that has one room with two beds and receives no operations funding from government for a catchment area with population nearing 30,000.

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<sup>16</sup> Wathen, N., Harris, R., Ford-Gilboe, M., and Hansen, M. (2015). What counts? A mixed-methods study to inform evaluation of shelters for abused women. *Violence Against Women*, 21(1).

<sup>17</sup> ACWS (2004). *Ethical/Moral Framework*. Edmonton: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.

All shelters listed in the table, with the exception of the Bow Valley shelter, are funded by the Alberta Government, Human Services department, most of them to provide between 10 and 20 beds. This translates into an annual contract of about \$500,000 to \$600,000 for a 10-bed shelter and \$700,000 to \$900,000 for a 20-bed shelter. These shelters often have to supplement Government funding with other funding or donor sources in order to provide the comprehensive continuum of services needed in their respective communities.

Table 2. Shelter location by population size and funded beds<sup>18</sup>

	<b>Population (census year)</b>	<b># beds funded by Ab Gov</b>
<b>Alberta North</b>		
Peace River region	23,116 (2014)	24
Cold Lake	15,736 (2014)	24
Lac La Biche County	12,220 (2013)	21
St. Paul	6,004 (2014)	20
Whitecourt	10,574 (2013)	11
High Level	3,641 (2011)	11
Slave Lake Region	10,000 (2012 +)	10
Fairview	9,002 (2014)	10
Hinton	9,640 (2014)	10
Grand Cache	4,319 (2014)	6
<b>Alberta South</b>		
High River <sup>19</sup>	12,920 (2014)	24
Taber	8,104 (2014)	21
Camrose	18,038 (2014)	20
Pincher Creek	3,619 (2014)	16
Rocky Mountain House	7,300 (2014)	10
Brooks	14,185 (2015)	10
Bow Valley	30,000 (2011)	0

As noted earlier, YWCA Banff does not receive any government funding for the facility (it does get \$133,000 to deliver outreach services). YWCA Director is currently in discussions with the Alberta Government regarding this lack of core funding, assuming that such funding would be contingent on YWCA compliance with the Human Services Shelter Standards,<sup>20</sup> as well as the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters Aspirational Service Standards.<sup>21</sup> Among other criteria, shelters generally have physical security measures including:

- security hardware on all doors providing access to the building;
- fenced backyard areas with controlled access;
- monitored surveillance cameras able to see outside the building, including parking lots or areas of public access;

<sup>18</sup> Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (2015). <https://www.acws.ca/shelters>

<sup>19</sup> Catchment area also includes Okotoks – population 28,016

<sup>20</sup> Government of Alberta (2002). Womens' Shelter Standards. Edmonton.

<sup>21</sup> ACWS (2004). Ethical/Moral Framework. Edmonton: Alberta Council of Women's Shelters.

- intercom system to screen and permit access to the building; and,
- policies on visitors for both staff and residents.

Since many women access shelters with children, the facilities also require play spaces, age-appropriate equipment and assurance that the children can be kept safe.

## 4.2 Demand for Shelter Services

Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) gathers information about services provided by the shelters across Alberta. This section summarizes information about 8 emergency shelters in the neighboring areas to help quantify the demand for shelter services in the area. These shelters were located in Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer, Calgary (two shelters), Strathmore, Lethbridge, and High River. The demand for shelter services is described here by reporting the number of women and children who are turned away because shelters are full and the total number of women and children served by shelters.

When women are turned away from a shelter they are connected with other services and resources, often including other shelters locally or elsewhere. In addition to shelters supporting their local catchment areas, they also make a commitment to support women who come from other areas. This is to acknowledge the respect for women's self-determination and ability to determine where they might best be served (and where they might be safer). This also reflects a commitment on the part of each shelter to be part of a supportive network that provides safe and secure accommodation to women from all areas of the country.

As shown in Figure 6 below, turn-away issue is a significant and increasing concern in shelters serving smaller catchment areas (increasing from 858 women turned away in 2010/2011 fiscal year to 1681 turned away in 2014/2015) and those in Calgary (increasing from 1923 to 3609 over the same time period).

Figure 6. Turn-away trends

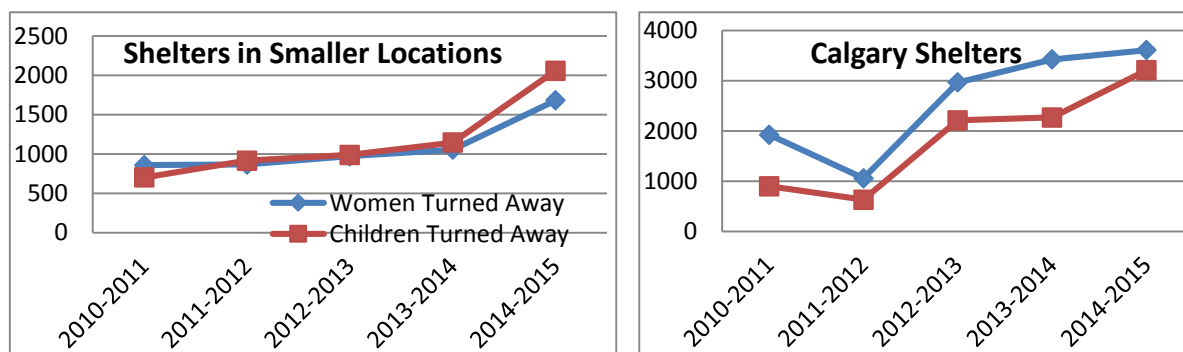
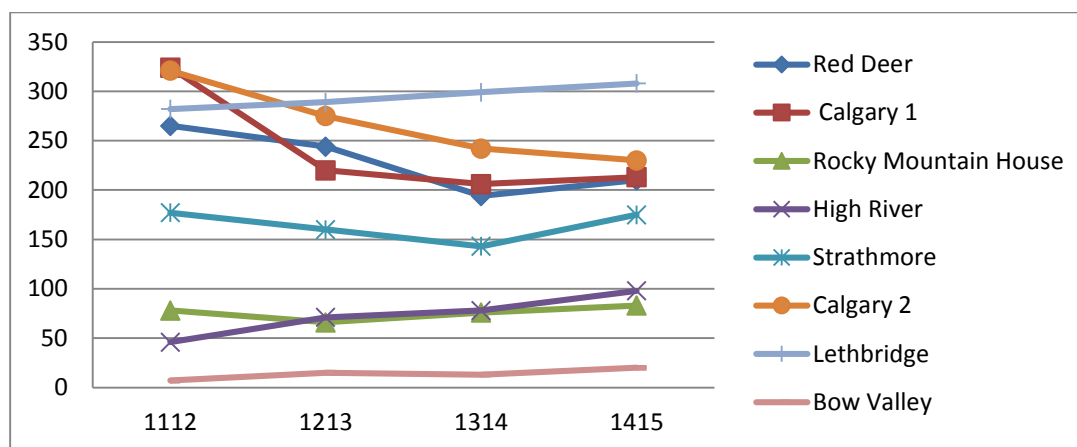


Figure 7 summarizes annual trends with respect to the number of women admitted to shelters in the area. As can be seen from the figure, the admissions appear to be decreasing in shelters serving larger areas, such as Calgary and Red Deer or serving as overflow for those areas, such as Strathmore (likely due to increasing length of stay in those shelters). However, the number of admissions are increasing elsewhere, most consistently over the last several years, since 2013 and, in almost every shelter over the last fiscal year.

As can be seen from the chart, Bow Valley shelter admission numbers are the lowest in the group. This is not the reflection of demand in the area - the shelter turns away between 35 and 36 women each year. Rather, it is a reflection of the limited capacity and resources available to the shelter to assure safety of the women and children who access shelter or of others living in the facility, to support children who are traumatized by violence and abuse with appropriate expertise, equipment and space and to recruit staff with qualifications to support to women experiencing mental health or addictions issues.

Figure 7. Number of Women Admitted by Year by Shelter



#### Summary – Domestic Violence Shelters in Alberta

Shelters are experiencing high turn away rates in both urban and rural locations and those rates are increasing. Number of women turned away and women admitted has been increasing in smaller, comparable locations such as High River and Rocky Mountain House. Population growth is only a part of the explanation for the increase in the turn-away rates and the numbers served, other explanations including limited affordable housing, limited transitional housing as well as increasing the profile of the shelters in their respective communities.

Women and children fleeing domestic violence represent a large proportion of the homeless population. Canadian research indicated that 29% of the absolutely homeless women and 37% of the relatively homeless women were fleeing abusive partners. Fleeing an abusive partner is not only a factor in women becoming homeless but also influences their continued homelessness, because it is unsafe to

return home to a partner or live in a place that the abusive partner may be able to find and access.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, shelters should be considered as an essential partner in the spectrum of homelessness services, ensuring safety of women and children across the country as well as supporting families who are homeless because of domestic violence and reducing the pressures on other housing-related services and supports.

## **5. Community Feedback Summary**

The Consultant interviewed 26 individuals representing 21 different organizations providing services in the Bow Valley (see Attachment C for the list of the participants). The following thematically summarizes their feedback, providing context where necessary to clarify the opinions, viewpoints and expectations from YWCA Banff. The summary also seeks to represent accurately the sentiments provided by all of the respondents, including, where appropriate, different perspectives and viewpoints.

The summary primarily speaks to the issue of domestic violence as this was the main focus of the current study. Although there are some references to sexual assault here, those issues will be more fully addressed over the course of the Sexual Assault Project that YWCA has recently initiated.

### **5.1 The Role of the YWCA Banff**

The participants described YWCA as well-positioned and as a logical organization to work with the community on this initiative. It has a strong relationship with the Bow Valley service providing and business communities, a good reputation and a proven ability to bring community together. Specifically to this project, the YWCA has a clear mandate and experience in addressing the issue of domestic violence, delivering public awareness initiatives and a providing a wide range of housing options. The participants also described YWCA as a sustainable organization, with multiple long-term funding sources and proven ability to raise funds and to engage community. It was considered to be of additional benefit that the YWCA Banff can call on the support and expertise of the National YWCA when needed.

The community members concur with the YWCA's own assessment that staff qualification, competency and experience is a key challenge for the YWCA. While all participants were encouraged by the new leadership and the management team at the YWCA, they were concerned that the current agency staff may not have the necessary skills to adequately support women fleeing domestic violence. YWCA staffing contingent is under-resourced and staff turn-over frequently. YWCA would have to ensure that sufficient resources are in place in order to attract staff with appropriate level of expertise.

### **5.2 Perception of Service Need**

As noted in the earlier section of this document, the YWCA does not approach this project with a specific model in mind, except to say that there is a need to improve services and facilities that the YWCA currently provides for women and children experiencing domestic violence or abuse. The organization has been limited by the shelter functionality and location, lack of appropriate resources to support

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<sup>22</sup> Tutty, L., Ogden, C., Giurgiu, B., Weaver-Dunlop, G., Damant, D., Thurston, W., Berman, H., Gill, C., Hampton, M., Jackson, M., Ussel, J., Delaney, D., Harrison, P., Silverstone, A., White, L., Dunbar, J., Ali, S., Solerno, J. (2009). "I Built my House of Hope". Best Practices to Safely House Abused and Homeless Women. Report prepared for the Homelessness Knowledge Development Program, Homeless Partnering Secretariat, Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

children in the shelter, and limited resource capacity to recruit and maintain staff with needed expertise. The YWCA would like for the community to consider a development of a facility or a service that can provide safe and secure temporary accommodation and supports for women and children fleeing domestic violence in the Bow Valley. The result would be an array of services that would be suitable, responsive, secure and flexible to address the full continuum of needs of these women and children.

Most of the respondents thought that there is a significant need in the area for a safe place for women and children – describing available options, e.g., the current YWCA shelter, the hospitals, the Rotary house, the hotels and the hostels – as not sufficient and not able to fully safeguard the safety of the families. In addition to a shelter, they also described, as increasing, the need for services and access, and this initiative as needed and timely. They substantiated their viewpoints by referring to multiple situations in which people are not willing to come forward if it means hospitals or the justice system becoming involved and instead looking for an option to remain safely in the community.

Some of the respondents had different perspectives with respect to best ways to support women and children experiencing domestic violence in the Bow Valley. They thought that individuals and families deal best with the impact of domestic abuse when they are able to safely remain in their own homes, close to their support networks and that the rates of domestic violence in the area may not be high enough to substantiate a bigger shelter.

Another perspective was that there are instances when women cannot be kept safe in their homes, and that the shelter, as it is currently provided is not sufficient to address the demand that exists in the Bow Valley. Most importantly, this initiative is not about building a bigger shelter, but about providing an array of services and facilities that can effectively respond to the needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence. As described earlier, this means safety and security features, adequate and age-appropriate facilities to support children who come to shelters with their mothers, and staff with qualifications to support to women experiencing mental health or addictions issues.

### **5.3 Potential Model Elements**

#### Develop an Integrated Continuum of Services

Much of the feedback highlighted a need for streamlining and clarity regarding the function of different services in the community. The respondents described the biggest gap as “not knowing what the plan of the day is...what are the programming changes” and concerns that there are communication issues among the key referral agencies. The process of making linkages in the area is very time intensive and is based on personal connections and relationships – this is potentially problematic as staff turn-over rates are generally high. There is a concern that “people are bounced around” multiple services, telling their stories multiple times, not always receiving the needed services or not becoming linked with necessary expertise. In general, many participants thought that community sometimes works “in silos” resulting in inefficient and ineffective processes. However, some respondents strongly disagreed with the suggestion that agencies in the Bow Valley work in silos, indicating that their experience while working with the Bow Valley agencies “has been the exact opposite” and were able to think of many instances when people who needed help went to several agencies that were able to help by working together in a seamless, timely and professional manner. The services map discussed earlier on in the document provides a potential explanation for these different viewpoints. It appears that, while a core group of service providers works closely together, supporting women and children in a well-integrated manner, there are a number of other services in the community that may not be similarly connected or integrated within the overall service delivery continuum.

Those who believed that collaboration in the community could be strengthened, emphasized the need to develop a full and interconnected continuum of services to address domestic violence issues in the community. In this model the services would include a central intake/triage, the shelter, transitional housing, and possibly other types of housing options, crisis counseling and outreach supports as well as prevention and education services.

Furthermore, a case manager could be assigned to each family and become their central point of contact and link families with services through direct referral or services. Several participants would really like to see services co-located in a “community centre” facilitating even easier access. In this scenario, the case manager would work with the family to ensure that necessary linkages are made, providing new ones as they become necessary and supporting relationships that clients already have established in the community. Ultimately, this approach would improve client accessibility to people with specific expertise needed to address specific issues. As illustrated by one of the participants: “knowing that someone is available to talk or knowing where you can go if you are in that situation and need a safe would be ideal...especially for someone who is too scared to ask for help”.

#### Include Community Education/Prevention Components

There was a general consensus among the participants about the importance and value of public education. They thought that public education aimed at all ages, including local schools, could help enhance the general level of awareness in the community, by focusing on prevention and promotion of healthy relationships, helping the community understand the root causes, scope and nature of the issue of domestic violence, and what individuals can do to address it. This could produce multiple benefits, potentially resulting in victims contacting the police sooner, increased willingness to report domestic violence incidents in the general community and, ultimately, prevention of future incidents of domestic violence altogether. Respondents emphasized that any public education initiatives will have to be delivered on a regular basis in order to reach the constantly changing population in the Bow Valley.

Another need in the community is some type of a screening protocol, to support professionals (e.g., health or education) when they are dealing with someone who might be experiencing domestic violence. The interviewees indicated that they needed “some types of a tool, a checklist or a flow chart” in order to be able to identify signs of abuse and would also benefit from a protocol that could support their work, guiding their interventions and referrals.

#### Provide a Domestic Violence Shelter/Community Centre in Canmore

As discussed earlier, a majority of the respondents identified a need for a safe place or a shelter for women to go to. The existing shelter in Banff, in their opinion, is not large or secure enough and is not optimally located. They thought that Canmore would be an ideal location, for several reasons, including: housing problems in Banff; larger population in Canmore; no domestic violence shelters in Canmore or in surrounding areas; domestic violence as a bigger need in Canmore than in Banff; no “need to reside” requirement; and, Canmore being more centrally located and, therefore, more accessible to most Bow Valley residents.



As noted earlier, several participants would really like to see shelter being an element of a larger centre where several services could be co-located (they particularly emphasized nursing, medical and mental health care and legal supports as potential partners in such a centre), and possibly include other housing options in addition to the shelter. It is important, from their perspective, that this Centre is not affiliated with a hospital or police to help increase comfort in reporting.

There was a variety of opinions about the type of shelter this could be. Some suggested that the YWCA could start by creating an effective emergency shelter first and possibly use a phased-in approach to gradually expand to a longer-term transitional option. Others suggested that while there would be some benefits of a short-term shelter for those visiting and needing shelter before they return home, a longer-term shelter would be a more effective option, given the likely challenges for women to locate housing after a short stay. A longer-term shelter with a 3 to 6-month stay would allow women to take advantage of the tourist season turn-over and rentals becoming available.

#### **5.4 Consider Needs of Different Population Groups**

Building on the idea of the integrated service delivery, the participants also highlighted the need to focus broadly, supporting a range of different client groups and associated needs. Some also suggested that the YWCA should gather feedback from the different client groups (e.g., youth, minority populations), as they are not often heard in developing initiatives such as this one.

##### Newcomers

Reliance on the Temporary Foreign Worker Program produced an influx of newcomers to the Bow Valley and challenges associated with families reconnecting after a long time apart. Newcomers experiencing domestic violence come with a unique set of needs, including language, cultural expectations, settlement and legal issues. They require specialized supports, but also services that are inviting and flexible, that build on strong and positive personal relationships, that allow for different cultural perspectives, and that can approach the issue of domestic violence in a culturally appropriate way. Some suggestions for specific services for newcomers (in addition to making connections to necessary settlement, legal and other supports) included engaging in cross-cultural training, working with the employers, identifying leaders in the community, and providing education and awareness in the community about shelters and their purpose.

##### Aboriginal Population

The number of Aboriginal people in the area is comparatively low, however, women from Morley reserve who do not wish to stay in Morley shelter may begin accessing the Bow Valley shelter when and if it becomes available. As with the newcomer populations the emphasis here is again on relationship building and a welcoming place. Additionally, it is culturally appropriate to focus on the whole family and address the issue from a broader perspective, where domestic violence is one part of the multiple interrelated challenges that result from intergenerational traumatization, colonization and the experience of residential schools.

Another, more complex issue, is whether YWCA Banff would be looking to pursue some type of a collaborative relationship with the Morley reserve. There are certainly opportunities in this work, as it could lead to improved services and supports for Aboriginal peoples that access services off reserve (e.g., Exshaw school, Canmore hospital) as well as ensuring provision of services and supports that are culturally competent and responsive to Aboriginal women and children. Developing such relationships takes time and has to be approached very carefully, by waiting for an invitation and coming as a partner rather than a project manager or administrator.

#### Other Client Groups

- Experts acknowledge that domestic violence places significant toxic stress on children's developing brain and can lead to repeated experiences of domestic violence as an adult.<sup>23</sup> The initiative will have to work closely with other service providers in the Bow Valley to ensure that services are in place to support children exposed to domestic violence. Lack of daycare spaces was also identified as a concern and may be considered in the YWCA's plan.
- Working with men will make children and women safer – the work may include groups for men who perpetrate domestic violence, as well as preventative initiatives focusing on helping learn about healthy relationships. Some also suggested that services for male victims should also be considered.
- Visitors to the area also have unique needs and require immediate access to services and supports as well as financial resources to help them get home.
- LGBTQ groups also have unique needs that have to be acknowledged and addressed.

### **5.5 Issues for Consideration**

The respondents identified several additional issues that the YWCA and community should consider in their discussions and planning of the facility. Some participants were concerned that, in a small community such as Canmore it would be difficult to maintain the privacy of the shelter and that local people would not come to the shelter because of it. Conversely, many modern shelters no longer subscribe to this need for privacy, and, instead, become community hubs, with significant security features and involvement of community members and service partners, thereby minimizing stigma and need for secrecy. Moreover, YWCA plans to continue providing shelter outreach in Banff.

There are concerns that the shelter would end up serving as an overflow facility for surrounding cities or towns where shelters cannot accommodate the demand (e.g., Morley, Calgary, High River etc.), rather than support local population; and that the Bow Valley housing would not be sufficient to accommodate those women and children once they leave the shelter. As YWCA moves to become a modern shelter, it will also become a member of a national shelter collective which works on the principle of reciprocity, supporting any women and children fleeing domestic violence. There will be (and have been) instances in which Bow Valley women and children accessed shelters elsewhere in Alberta or even in other provinces and the reverse will undoubtedly be true if a new facility is built in Canmore.

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<sup>23</sup> McDonald, S., and Tough, S. (2015). The 2013 Alberta Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Survey. Key Findings. Calgary: Alberta Centre for Child, Family & Community Research; Norlien Foundation.

Additionally, the women from outside the Bow Valley will be accessing the emergency (short-term) shelter only, with YWCA making linkages during their stay to reintegrate them into their home community. Meanwhile, women and children from the Bow Valley will be using the longer-term transitional spaces, accessing all of the local community services to support return to stability in the Bow Valley.

Finally, FOIP issues may create obstacles to information sharing necessary for effective case management and would need to be addressed in any type of integrated service delivery or partnership initiative.

## **5.6 Additional Service Barriers or Gaps in Bow Valley**

The interviews also helped identify additional service gaps that the YWCA Banff initiative may consider as it proceeds with this initiative. The issue of sexual assault was the most frequently identified barrier or gap. The respondents described significant challenges in supporting victims of sexual assault. First, there is lack of specific therapeutic expertise in the area, and people are not able to find the help they need. Second, due to lack of services locally the majority of the victims have to access services in Calgary. Third, the service providers struggle with low rates of sexual assault reporting and would like to develop a plan to address this problem.

Housing was confirmed as a major problem in the area. Participants again referred to the 'need to reside' as an issue, as well as a high cost of housing (combined with overall high cost of living and comparatively low salaries) and shortage of housing in general. Large newcomer families find it particularly difficult to locate a residence that accommodates their needs. The impact of the 2013 floods is still felt in the community, as a number of people are still living in post-flood temporary housing. Lack of affordable housing leads to other problems, such as overcrowding, illegal suites, family violence and health risks. Most people concurred that there is a need for many different types of housing options in Bow Valley, particularly affordable, supported and special purpose housing.

Legal supports and services emerged as another significant service gap. Historically Calgary Legal Guidance (CLG) provided this service and has been described as accessible and timely. However, organizational changes no longer allow CLG to continue supporting Bow Valley residents in the same way as they have done in the past. The community needs local and accessible legal advice and expertise, which is particularly important for individuals dealing with the issues of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Lack of free or inexpensive counseling was another barrier that was raised in the interviews, including individual, couple and group counseling. A reference was made to such services being provided in the past by the YWCA Community Resource Centre. Discontinuation of those services created a service gap in the community.

## 5.7 Moving Forward Together

Clearly, this initiative will succeed only if the Bow Valley service providing community is engaged, consulted and benefits from the proposed project. The participants provided a number of suggestions for YWCA as it proceeds with developing the plan to address the issue of the domestic violence. In order to capitalize on the existing community strength, the initiative should be closely connected with other resources in the community and build on existing collaborations and relationships. This is especially important with respect to building and financing a shelter – such an effort requires hands-on involvement of multiple service providers. The following organizations were specifically highlighted for inclusion:

- Work closely with the Banff, Canmore and Cochrane FCSS departments. These organizations have a social planning and community development role and can function as hosts or connectors as they support and encourage communication among different parties.
- The participants described YWCA as closely engaged with Banff services, but that there is a need for more of a presence in Canmore – by identifying and connecting with key services there. YWCA has already made significant inroads in addressing this issue.
- There are other similar initiatives that are planned and YWCA Banff should ensure that the key stakeholders of those project are included and consulted to avoid duplication (e.g., Bow Valley Regional Housing Needs Study, Canmore FCSS strategic Plan looking at service alignment and gaps).
- Connections should be made with outlying communities that are not always included in collaborative efforts in the area (e.g., Lake Louise, MD of Bighorn, Kananaskis, Cochrane). Interviewees have suggested that there is a real lack of knowledge in those areas about services and initiatives in Banff and Canmore. It is recommended that contact be made through key individuals in each community.
- The initiative may also benefit from inviting representatives of certain businesses that would be impacted by the issue of domestic violence – hotel industry as well as bars and restaurants were the main suggestions here. For example, YWCA may work with the Bar Watch group which has been successful in engaging bars, RCMP and other service providers in Banff.
- YWCA should ensure that some key service providers in the area are included and consulted. In particular, many of the respondents highlighted the important and valuable role that Victims Services has in the community, emphasizing their flexibility and openness, strong collaborative approach, expertise and essential support that they provide to victims, particularly those experiencing domestic violence in the Bow Valley.

The participants also provided advice with respect to ways that community can best be engaged, highlighting the following considerations:

- Use a “concentric circles of involvement” relying on smaller working groups as well as larger groups with different functions;
- Respect the autonomy of each agency – different mandates, values and philosophies may be at odds with the activities proposed for the initiative;
- Identify key individuals or committees in the community that could serve in a connector/ coordinator role. Some suggested that the Interagency Committee may be a best hub for making such connections;

- In order to move forward, propose several different models and then brainstorm with the participants to determine where they see their organizations fitting in; and,
- Make sure that everyone at the table functions as an equal partner.

In order to ensure success, the collective should include a sustainability plan, which would build in financial supports for long-term project implementation. The group could work with the provincial government to determine what commitments are possible there, build in an evaluation framework that would allow to demonstrate success, and consider an annual partnered fundraising event.

## 6. Summary and Next Steps

The community members expressed their appreciation that YWCA is engaging in this conversation and is involving the larger community. They believe that, at a minimum, these types of conversations are healthy as they provide an opportunity to collectively examine how work can be done better. The participants are, by and large, optimistic and hopeful that something tangible will come out of the initiative. They believe that the work has real potential to address gaps in services and look forward to the overall improvement of domestic violence service delivery in Bow Valley area.

The community feedback as well as the other information gathered in this document appears to coalesce into an integrated model of service delivery, with elements as described below. Note that this list represents what we would consider as one possible delivery model that YWCA can work toward. It is also a list that can provide a starting point for community discussions and decisions with respect to ways to move forward.

- A facility would be located in Canmore, with possible shelter supports in Banff;
- A facility would include shelter/housing spaces, allowing for a full continuum of services to meet all of the housing and shelter needs of women and children fleeing domestic violence – including some emergency spaces, some transitional/supportive spaces as well as affordable, long-term housing options;
- Based on the size of the catchment area and comparable facilities elsewhere, the shelter may require between 10 - 15 emergency and/or transitional beds designed for flexibility to accommodate current needs;
- The facility would function as a community hub – its location would be well-known and promoted in the community; it would be integrated with local community and services; in addition to domestic violence and possibly sexual assault services and supports the facility would co-locate several other services, including, for example, health, mental health as well as legal services;
- The facility would serve the Bow Valley catchment area, with the shelter spaces also being open to women and children outside of the area, to support the collective mission of women's shelters as welcoming to all women and children seeking safety;
- The facility would include several levels of security measures, restricting access to shelter/transitional spaces, but allowing open access to other areas; partnering with the local RCMP to establish security protocols and drive-by schedule and engaging local communities in neighborhood watch activities;
- The facility would include specialized programming for children and parenting support, including age appropriate facilities and equipment in order to effectively address trauma caused by exposure to domestic violence and prevent domestic violence in the future;
- The services would also include public education and prevention programming, focusing on general education and awareness, supports to other professionals to develop screening procedures for domestic violence, and building a profile of the community hub;
- Services and supports would be provided to the women and children in the shelter/housing spaces as well as in the community, using an integrated case management model, service providers and specialists working closely and openly with each other to make sure that women and children receive the services they need in the most seamless manner possible;
- Services and supports would be provided through a community partnership, each partner playing a role that most accurately corresponds with their level of expertise and experience;

- YWCA Banff would have resources to recruit and retain over a long period of time staff with expertise to support women and children in shelter and in the community, to provide culturally-competent services, to work collaboratively with the community and to provide integrated case management services and supports.

YWCA plans to build on the feedback and information gathered in this report, using the following initial steps for moving forward:

- Distribute this report to the individuals who participated in the consultation to gather their feedback, opinions and suggestions;
- Bring together the study participants and any other key community representatives for a discussion of the information in this report and identification of a model or model elements with which to move this initiative forward;
- Strike a Leadership Group, comprised of key community representatives, to work together towards development of the plan for the next, implementation Phase of this project;
- Model implementation phase will follow, with a particular focus on long-term sustainability and community engagement and ownership; and,
- Work with existing community committees to ensure full community integration and engagement.

## **Attachment A**

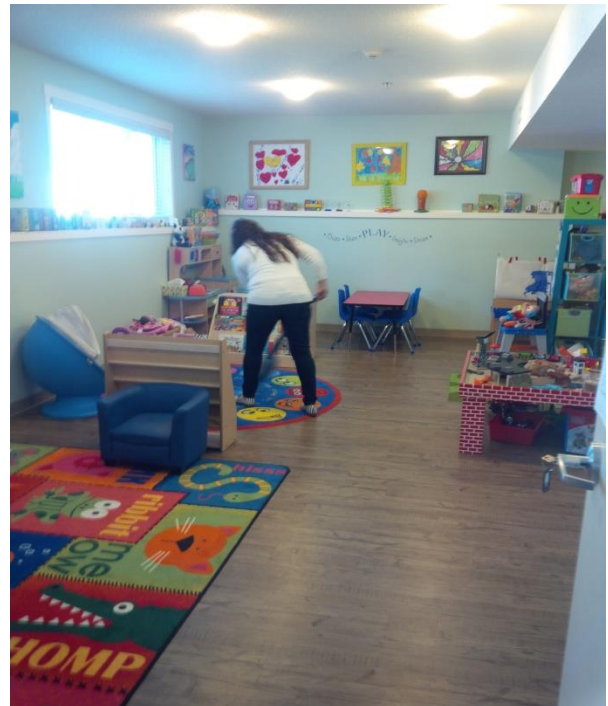
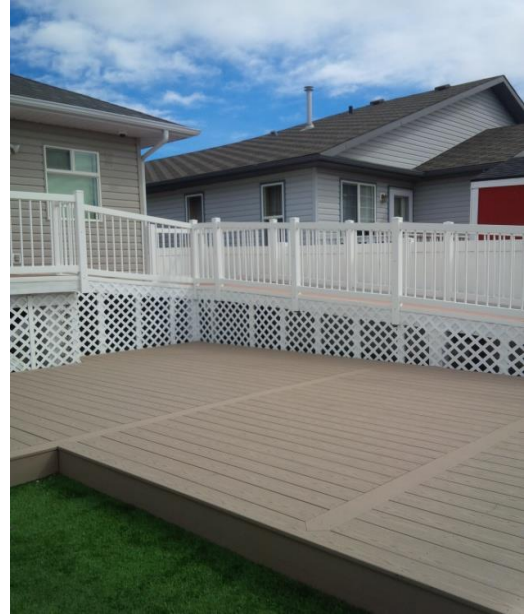
### **Systems Map: List of Service Providers**

- AHS: Alberta Health Services: Addiction, Mental Health Services, Financial Supports
- BMSH & CGH: Banff Mineral Springs Hospital & Canmore General Hospital
- BVVS: Bow Valley Victim Services
- BVEWS: Bow Valley Emergency Women's Shelter (YWCA Banff)
- FCSS: Family and Community Support Services with Town of Banff (TOB) and Town of Canmore (TOC). (Includes Interagency Group, Settlement Services, Parent Link and Primary Care Network (PCN))
- RCMP: Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Outlying agencies/organizations that interact & support the Service Providers:
- ACWS – Alberta Council of Women's Shelters
- Alberta Court/Justice
- Alberta Works (Human Services), Provincial Government
- Banff Bar Watch with BLLHA: Banff Lake Louise Hospitality Association
- BHC – Banff Housing Corporation (ownership model with affordable rental units in development)
- BRRR/H2HC – Hard to House Coalition (crisis housing)
- BVRA: Bow Valley Regional Housing (Supports to Single Parents and Seniors)
- BVRT: Bow Valley Regional Transit
- CCHC – Canmore Community Housing (PAH: Perpetually Affordable Housing) Child Care – Canmore Community Daycare, Banff Childcare Centre, Private Day homes
- Churches (Faith Based Organizations)
- Food Banks (Banff and Bow Valley Food Bank)
- ID#9: Improvement District 9 (includes Lake Louise, Castle Junction)
- MD of Bighorn: Municipal District of Bighorn
- Morley Women's Shelter
- Primary Care Network Bow Valley
- School Boards – Canadian Rockies Public Schools (Banff, Canmore, Exshaw),



## Attachment B

### Typical Shelter in Pictures



## **Attachment C**

### **List of Interview Participants**

Many community members contributed their expertise, time and information to this needs assessment effort. YWCA Banff would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their consultation, input and feedback.

- Alison Gerrits – Town of Banff FCSS
- Anna-Lisa Christalaw – Town of Banff, Settlement Services
- Barb Shellian – Bow Valley Community and Rural Health
- Carla Pauls – Exshaw School and Nakoda Elders Wisdom Society
- Catherine Ashdown and Tracy Knoch – Alberta Works
- Clare Jarman, Government of Alberta – Probation
- Connie MacDonald, Steve Crotty, Linda Chisholm–YWCA Banff
- Daniel and Lanny – Crossway Community Church
- Deb Grady – MD Bighorn, Community Services
- Dr. Doug Paige – Lake Louise Medical Clinic
- Ellen Thuringer, Lisa Brown and staff – Parent Link
- Ian Wilson – Bow Valley Regional Housing
- John Eneas – Canmore RCMP
- Kevin Driver – Banff Ministerial
- Louise Nieder-Heitmann – Bow Valley Primary Care Network
- Peter Quinn – Bow Valley Victim Services
- Shawn Carr – Town of Banff FCSS
- Shelley Buchan – Covenant Health, Banff Mineral Springs Hospital
- Spencer Schneider – Cochrane/Bow Valley Addiction and Mental Health
- Stan Andronyk – Banff RCMP
- Tara Gilchrist – Town of Canmore FCSS