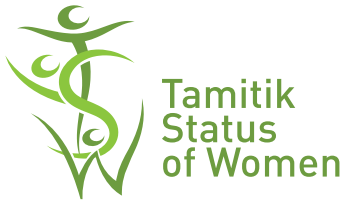


BUILDING KNOWLEDGE



Indigenous Housing Series: Dunmore Place

Dunmore Place is a transition house located in Kitimat for women and their children fleeing potential or existing violence and abuse. In addition to Dunmore Place, Tamitik Status of Women (TSW) provides other programs and services focused on intervention and prevention of violence and poverty issues.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND SUPPORTS

- › **Housing:** Temporary women's housing, housing search, landlord-tenant relations support
- › **Education and skills training:** Employment skills
- › **Personal development:** Life skills, safety planning, access to a child support worker, women and children's counselling, women's group, individual case planning and goal setting
- › **Other services and activities:** Outreach worker, children who witness abuse worker, 24/7 crisis line, communal meals, free store, anti-poverty program, smudging bowl, advocacy, external referrals (health clinic, child development centre)

The purpose of this case study series is to highlight housing providers and programs that serve Indigenous women, youth, and families who are in need of housing support and facing child welfare intervention. The case studies, developed Summer 2016, provide information on program components and support. They also examine key practices, program highlights, challenges and successes. It is hoped this information may inform practices of other housing providers looking to create or expand wrap around support services to help families stay together.





KEY PRACTICES

TSW takes a women and children-centered approach, focusing on women and children’s needs and empowerment. This flexible, holistic and strengths-based approach is integral to TSW’s success. TSW also uses harm-reduction with substance use issues, except in cases where safety or health are a concern.

TSW has an open door policy at Dumore Place. Women who are not residents can drop-in for tea, use the facilities, and be connected to other services. TSW’s open door policy, along with its Anti-Poverty program and Free Store, are important first points of contact for women fleeing abuse.

TSW staff are encouraged to maintain a non-judgmental approach to ensure women view Dumore Place as an open, safe environment. TSW staff work with all women to develop and implement safety plans.

As TSW is located in a smaller, northern community, the potential labour pool is small. Due to the sensitive nature of transition house work, TSW focuses on hiring staff with complementary personalities, including the ability to listen coupled with a genuine interest in supporting women in an empowering way.

*“Don’t make it shameful for them or they won’t reach out again”
[speaking on the cycle of abuse].*

DUNMORE PLACE STATISTICS

Housing units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded for 8 beds Typically run at 10 bed capacity
Estimated clients per year (#)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants per year: 110 women and 83 children Average age: 35-45 Repeat clients: 15%
Length of stay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 days + occasional extension
Estimated Indigenous clients (%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75%-80%
Referrals, intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals: Self-referrals, Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD), police, hospital, Victims Services, landlords, general public, businesses, other internal programs Intake: Continuous
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule: 24/7 staffing, 12 hour shifts, 1 staff member at all times Total: 20-22
Key funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government: BC Housing Other: Community donations, Kitimat Community Foundation Telethon
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government: BC Housing, MCFD, RCMP Other: Haisla Nation, Child Development Centre, Kitimat Community Services, WorkBC, Community Health Organizations, BC Society of Transition Houses

SPOTLIGHT

RELATIONSHIP WITH HAISLA NATION

TSW developed a strong relationship with the nearby Haisla Nation. Two Haisla members are currently involved with TSW in different capacities. A Haisla member volunteer is working with staff to help further develop TSW’s Indigenous cultural sensitivity and awareness. Another Haisla member is currently completing a one-year work placement at TSW as part of her Master’s degree.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- › **Strong community communication:** As a participant of Kitimat's interagency meetings, TSW helps identify service gaps, build relationships and community awareness. TSW is also part of the Integrated Case Assessment Team (ICAT) meetings, where different community partners collaborate to keep high-risk domestic violence victims and their children safer. The ICAT meetings bring clarity to agencies involved and enable the development of a holistic approach.
- › **Openness:** TSW cultivates community support with its open door approach and welcoming events. For example, TSW occasionally hosts community lunches and open houses.
- › **Reducing repeat clients:** The Homeless Prevention Program (HPP) helped TSW reduce repeat clients. TSW estimates that HPP decreased repeat clients by 15% of its total client base.

CHALLENGES

- › **Funding for respite care:** Due to insufficient funding, respite support for child care is unavailable. Women in crisis require time to stabilize themselves and their families.
- › **Follow-up:** The client community is often difficult to locate, especially with limited staff and resources.
- › **Market and social housing:** Kitimat does not have second stage housing. As a result, women who cannot manage market housing and are transitioning from Dunmore Place are at high risk of homelessness. They may be further hampered by discrimination, commonly experienced by clients searching for market housing.
- › **Funding for men's programs and supports:** While there is a need for specific programs to support men, the closest program is located in Terrace, a 45-minute car ride away without available travel funding. Due to Kitimat's industrial economic base, shift work is the predominate form of employment in the community, making regular program attendance difficult.

- › **Staffing funding:** Funding for staff is limited, resulting in high workloads. For example, one staff member manages the house, connects clients to services, and deals with referrals and crisis situations.
- › **High staff turnover:** Burnout and uncompetitive wages have resulted in high turnover. Recruiting and retaining on-call and casual staff are also challenging. These challenges are further magnified by the limited labor pool available in a small community.

SUCCESSES

- › **Relationship-building with landlords:** TSW has built strong working relationships with landlords to help house women in the community who have been blacklisted among landlords. TSW supports positive relations between landlords and tenants by conducting regular tenant check-ins and working with both parties to resolve issues before they escalate to possible eviction.
- › **Partnerships:** TSW has developed a number of strong working relationships with a variety of partners. Key relationships include RMCP, MCFD, Mental Health and Addictions and Kitimat Community Services. TSW's relationships with other community service providers make it possible for meetings and appointments to occur at Dunmore Place rather than travelling to other locations, especially valuable if women have children. TSW is currently working with Guelph University and the Haisla Nation to create a community vitality index to help track community well-being from a women's perspective.

"We are consistently re-assessing to help reduce the barriers to women's safety. There is always a reason behind why a woman is calling".