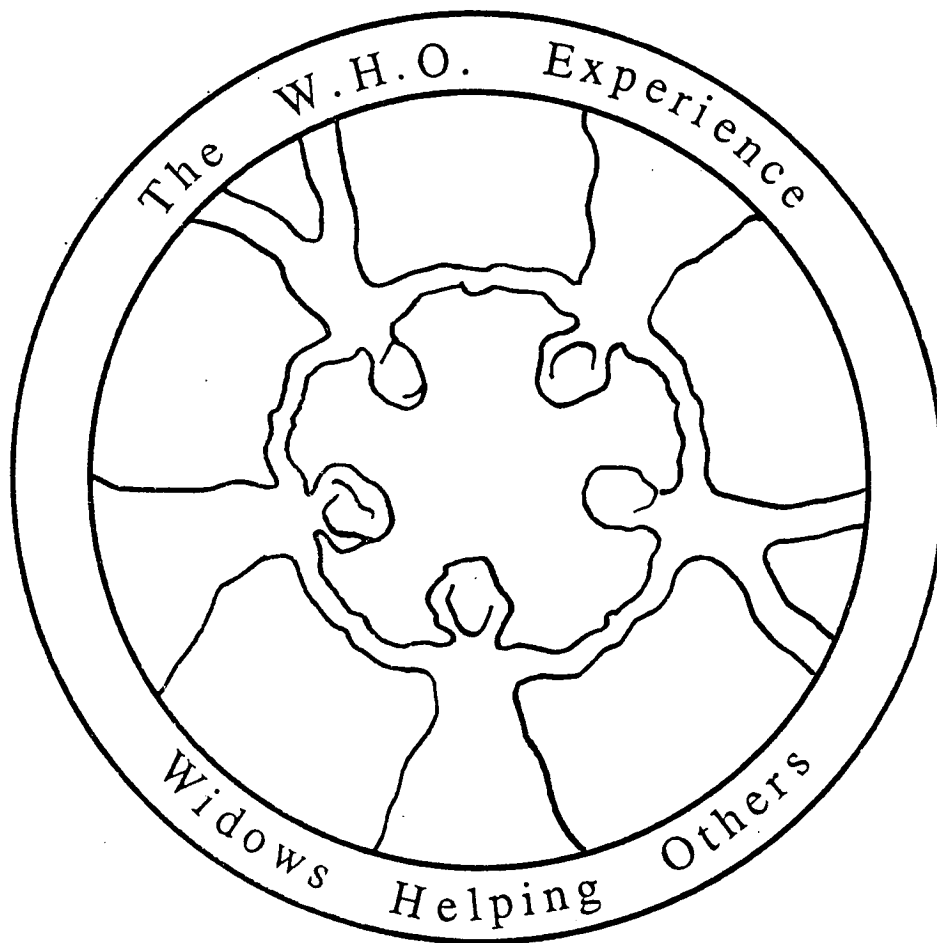
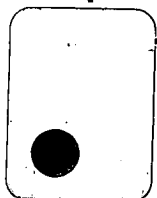


# WIDOWS HELPING OTHERS



Creating a Brighter Future  
Together



WIDOWS HELPING OTHERS:

CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

A resource book for widows funded by New Horizons of Canada and prepared in collaboration with the W.H.O. C.A.N. Board, a group of widows representing widows' support groups in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

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## SUPPORT SYSTEMS

My right hand is being held  
By someone who knows more than I  
And I am learning.

My left hand is being held  
By someone who knows less than I  
And I am teaching.

Both my hands  
Need thus to be held  
For me...to be.

from Is this where I was going?  
by Natasha Josefowitz

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Artist Arlene Byrne created the graphics.

There were many others, too numerous to mention, who shared their experiences, thoughts, and feelings with me. I thank you all for contributing to a most valuable learning experience.

## PREFACE: GETTING IT ALL TOGETHER

This publication is a collection of observations and insights that we hope will be useful to individual widows and their support groups across the province and the country. It is not our intent to duplicate the many excellent resource materials for widows produced in recent years, but rather to applaud the ones we have discovered and to offer the reader a flavour of the groups on the West Coast of British Columbia.

The pages that follow incorporate a wealth of information from a variety of different sources:

- results from the research literature
- informal comments at Board meetings and the Conference
- results of formal and informal evaluation procedures
- summaries of the conference addresses and workshops
- an inspirational address
- a message from the President of the Board.

Our purpose in filling these pages is to provide further evidence of the effectiveness of widows' support, the strength of our common bond, and the uniqueness of each group experience. We hope our story will give you courage to face the future and inspire you to join a group that will meet your needs, to inject new enthusiasm into the group to which you already belong, or to start a group yourself.

## WIDOWS HELPING OTHERS

### WHO ARE THE WIDOWED?

The latest figures from Statistics Canada (1986) tell us:

- There are 1,250,395 widowed in Canada -  
more than the population of greater Vancouver!
- There are 907,290 persons over 65 who are widowed -  
about the size of the city of Vancouver!
- 33.6% of the population over 65 is widowed

In the province of British Columbia alone (total population 2,883,370):

- There are 144,470 widowed persons
- There are 108,955 persons over 65 who are widowed
- 31.2% of the population over 65 are widowed
- 75% of widowed persons are over 65
- The proportion of women to men is higher at all ages
- Women outnumber men as much as 5 to 1.

Those numbers are quite staggering. Dr. Ann Martin-Matthews, a researcher from the University of Guelph, calls widowhood an "expectable event, a natural life transition". In other words, if you are married and female, you can expect to be a widow.

So, who are we? As the population ages, we are increasingly over 65 and female. We have families and we are alone. We are working and retired, wealthy and poor. We are all ages and from all walks of life. Each experience, like each individual, is somewhat unique, yet we have much in common. Age is not very important -- it is our life circumstances that create a common bond.

IT IS THROUGH AN EXPLORATION OF OUR COMMON EXPERIENCE, THAT WE CAN HOPE TO  
CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL.

## WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

A LOT OF STRESS...

According to Dr. Stephen Holliday and Dr. Gloria Gutman, researchers from Simon Fraser University, women in modern industrialized countries experience a drop in status as a result of the death of their husbands. They suffer a disruption in social activity and social relationships - in other words, they lose their role in society.

WE DON'T JUST LOSE A SPOUSE, WE LOSE A WHOLE WAY OF LIFE.

A group of healthcare researchers from Toronto, headed by Nurse-clinician Dr. Mary Vachon, tell it like this:

...conjugal bereavement is among the best documented of life event stressors and has been demonstrated to increase the risk of physical, psychological, and social impairment.

(Vachon et al., 1980, p. 1380)

Formal research is beginning to corroborate what we who have experienced widowhood have already known:

LOSING A SPOUSE IS THE SINGLE MOST STRESSFUL EVENT IN ONE'S LIFE, OFTEN LEADING TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND/OR PHYSICAL ILLNESS.



## PREDICTABLE STAGES...

There are a number of writers who have looked at the predictable stages we go through after the loss of a spouse. Again, respecting the uniqueness of each experience, there are common features of the journey through grief to a new life. Martin-Matthews (1984) identifies two distinct stages of widowhood: the early grief stage and a later transitional stage. When asked, 'What were your most critical problems in the early stages, widows at the first annual conference in B.C. gave the following answers:

response	response frequency
emotional:	35
loneliness	20
no-one special to talk over problems	7
great feeling of responsibility	2
need someone who understands	2
insomnia	2
grief	2
problems of daily living:	23
finances/legal	10
raising family alone	5
getting a job	3
making decisions	2
instrumental (eg. transportation)	3
beginning again:	5
getting back on track	3
learning to say "I" instead of "we"	1
making time left meaningful	1

Friends and family are particularly important in the early stages of bereavement. When widows at the conference were asked, 'Who helped you most during those first few shaky months?', 81 respondents said:

family . . . . .	54
old friends . . . . .	42
a widowed friend . . . . .	18
doctor . . . . .	13
widow from a support group . . . . .	11

While family and friends are, indeed, important, Martin-Matthews (1984) claims someone who has had the same experience is often more helpful in facilitating the grieving process. Furthermore, there are growing numbers who don't have family (eg. through personal choice and improved birth control measures) or whose family and old friends live far away.

In the later transitional stage, the task is to get to know yourself, develop new friendships, and create meaningful social roles. As one widow at the conference put it: "My husband was the centre of my life. It wasn't until I was widowed that I was able to think about me." Getting to know who we really are can take time and hard work. Sometimes well-meaning family members can actually work against us by keeping us locked into a very narrow and nonfunctional role. Emotional and social support outside the family network is critical to building a new life as a single person.

In summary, if we consider the following facts:

- the population is aging
- the population of older widows is increasing
- if we are married, we can expect to be widowed
- losing a spouse is the single most stressful event
- increasing numbers of elderly are alone without family
- a large number of older women are poor
- formal support services are costly

We can only conclude:

THE PROVISION OF AN ADEQUATE SUPPORT NETWORK FOR THE WIDOWED IS ESSENTIAL TO A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.

## WHY DO WE NEED SELF-HELP GROUPS?

Community health professionals have long recognized the impact of grief on mental and physical health. Until recently, however, there has been little recognition of the benefits of informal support groups because there were no records kept and consequently little understanding of what the groups provided. More recently, professionals have begun to take note of the value of widows' support groups and there has been increasing communication between professionals and informal support systems.

In his address to the Canadian Association on Gerontology in Quebec City in 1986, Dr. Morton Lieberman presented a summary of ten years' work on self-help models in California. Lieberman's major contribution has been to provide a framework for self-help groups with a focus on the effectiveness of widows' support groups and an emphasis on the potential for personal growth supported by the group. He measured such factors as depression, anxiety, self-esteem, social function, coping strategies, and life satisfaction. In comparing the effectiveness of professional grief support groups and self-help groups, Lieberman suggests there is a specific process within the self-help group that is responsible for change - this is the process of developing functional social networks. Widowhood must be conceived as not just a period of grief, but a complete redefinition of the self and one's social roles.

IT SEEMS THE MORE FRIENDS YOU HAVE WHO ARE SUPPORTIVE AND STIMULATING, THE MORE LIKELIHOOD OF GOING THROUGH THE TRANSITION AND COMING OUT THE OTHER SIDE A HEALTHY PERSON.

## SUPPORT GROUPS PROVIDE SOCIAL NETWORKS AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

Dr. Martin-Matthews is in complete agree with Dr. Lieberman and further suggests the highest priority must now be given to the examination of widowhood as a process of transition..not as a status. It is a process whereby one reconstructs one's world: focus must be on the change in social relationships which occurs as a result of widowhood.

The value of widows' groups in providing social support was emphasized by those who completed our conference evaluation questionnaire. When asked, 'What benefits have you received from your group?', responses related to social (34), emotional support (23), activity (8), and service (4). A total of 36 people indicated friendship/companionship as the greatest benefit. Again, when those who were members of a group were asked, 'What do you like most about your group?', the response pattern was the same as above: social (33), emotional support (15), and service (3). The most important function is clearly social, followed by emotional support. It is the development of a social network that seems most beneficial to those who must create a new role for themselves as single women. And...

A SUPPORT GROUP PROVIDES A COMFORTABLE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH TO EXPLORE NEW SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CREATE A NEW 'SINGLE SELF'.

Given the majority of the widowed are over 65 years of age, it is not surprising that opportunities for widows' groups to develop and evolve as a valuable social system have come largely through New Horizons' initiatives.

## HOW? WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM NEW HORIZONS...

A brief history of New Horizons' programs outlined by Dr. Mark Novak, a sociologist from the University of Manitoba, provides the context within which the widows' support movement has developed in British Columbia. The New Horizons' Program began in 1972 to help older adults:

- develop projects for their own good and the good of others
- use their many skills and talents
- combat social isolation in later years, and
- play an active role in society.

Novak emphasizes the need for active participation...

...older people need more than social security. They also need outlets for creativity and a chance to serve others. They need to play an active role in society and in creating a good old age for themselves and their peers. (Novak, 1987, p. 353).

Since its inception in 1972 and prior to Novak's report in 1987, New Horizons had sponsored well over 25,000 projects, including many initiatives in widows' support. The first widows' support group in British Columbia was started by Elsie Palmer in 1972 and located at the downtown YWCA. Palmer's initiative has evolved into an active nonprofit organization providing individual and group support to all men and women experiencing the stress of a major loss in their lives.

Since that first project in 1972, New Horizons has funded a number of widows groups, and the movement is growing throughout the province. More recently the Langley group took some important steps in the Fall of 1987 toward the development of a provincial network of support for widows on the West Coast, an attempt to consolidate the widows network that exists and to reach out to all women on their own who might benefit from a support group.

## WHO ARE THE GROUPS?

Acting on their vision for a provincial widows' network of support, the Langley W.H.O. (for 'widows helping others') group moved to form a Board. Representatives of six other widows' groups sponsored by New Horizons in the lower mainland of British Columbia were enlisted, with members from White Rock, Surrey, and Langley forming the Board and the remaining groups providing support through subcommittees, fundraising, etc. When asked to compile a brief report on the history and the activities of their membership, the seven participating groups provided the following information.

### THE ABBOTSFORD WHO GROUP

In the Fall of 1977, the Co-ordinator of the Senior Adult Resource Services, who had occasion to meet with several widows in the area, contacted 10 women who had expressed an interest in forming a group. With the appointment of a co-ordinator, the group applied for a New Horizons' grant.

These 10 widows were responsible for planning, anticipating needs, establishing the purpose and objectives, budgeting, naming the group, etc. The purpose of the group was to help women going through the grief process and to assist them in adjusting to becoming single, autonomous people. To accomplish this, the group set up a centre, furnished, equipped and maintained it. They organized meetings, held classes and self-study groups, and worked with those wishing services on a one-to-one basis. The main concern was always to help widows through the grieving process and to assist them in making the transition to single status.

The original grant was funded in March of 1977 and since that time the group has undergone a transition. Membership has grown by leaps and bounds -- from 10 to 17 to 35 to 58. Two of the original 10 are still active W.H.O.

members. Several of the next 30 members are active participants. Last year the membership grew to 143. We are currently at 127. With such a large group, we became a registered society in January of 1985.

While we changed our form, we have remained true to our original aims. We are totally self-sufficient, planning for our own growth and future development. We have a monthly business meeting plus a regular weekly meeting. Our committees take care of: crafts, sick and visiting, refreshments, trips, properties, publicity, history, photography, telephone, chaplain, a flea market and birthday greetings. Our library is quite sufficient and our outings, bus trips and programs are eagerly anticipated. The drop-in centre is open from 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., five days a week in the basement of the Abbotsford Library.

#### THE COQUITLAM WHO GROUP

The Coquitlam "W.H.O." group originated when 8 widows gathered together on December 18, 1980. The first formal meeting was held at the legion on January 8, 1981 with 23 attending. At present the membership totals 60 to 65 and meets each Wednesday at Dogwood Pavilion.

We have a counsellor and a Grief Recovery group meets at a nearby church. The group aims to be caring, loving and supportive, and to assist members to find help where and when needed and to provide opportunities for recreation in which a woman alone may participate. We welcome widows, divorcees and single women. We have speakers on many topics, take trips to shopping malls, have the occasional card or bingo game, visit places of interest, help serve at Dogwood's teas, etc., have a yearly picnic in a local park and a yearly Christmas and Birthday party. We are not allowed to raise money as we meet under Dogwood's umbrella and pay no rent. It is felt we lose something by not having to work

together but through the friendships formed at the meetings a number of little groups get together and meet for lunch, dinner, or bridge on a regular basis.

#### THE LANGLEY WHO GROUP

The Langley W.H.O. Group was first started in 1980 and has grown from an enthusiastic group of 2 or 3 neighbours to a membership of over 80 at the present time. With encouragement from Family Services and grants from New Horizons, we have established a daily drop-in and a very solid network. Many women who find themselves widowed and retired from a busy and fulfilling life have found friendship and a renewed interest in life in this group.

Our many activities include pot luck suppers, card parties, speakers on interesting subjects, films and bus trips. We have enjoyed many trips to the Cloverdale Raceway, barbeques, picnics and pool parties during the summer. We give to charities, help with Christmas hampers and work at Cancer and Heart Fund Drives. We must pay our rent so make our money from bazaars, bake sales and a nominal membership fee.

Twenty-five of us travelled to Britain in 1985 to attend the World-wide Conference of Widows. We found it very interesting and since then it has been our hope to establish a province-wide network of widows groups. The W.H.O. C.A.N. conference represents a giant step in the realization of our hopes for the future.

#### MAPLE RIDGE WHO GROUP

Two years ago I never knew such an organization as the W.H.O. existed. My daughter learned about it as a patient in Eagle Ridge Hospital and relayed the information to me. I felt we needed a group in Maple Ridge and after a week or two, I decided to go for it. What did I have to lose?



I began preparation, advertising, etc. I gave myself one month and if I couldn't find anyone interested, I would call it quits. I figured if even 6 people were interested, I would be happy and call my first meeting.

Two years ago in May I had the first 5 soon-to-be-members to my home. They were all enthusiastic, eager and thought it was a great idea. We met and we all told our stories. I suggested we wait a couple of weeks to see how many more were interested. In two weeks we had to look around for a new home! We were lucky to get a room at the Leisure Centre, with a count of 12.

I am happy to say we eventually outgrew the lecture room at the Centre. The senior group was kind enough to vote us in and so we amalgamated with them in the Centennial Lodge, where we hope to reside for a long time. We have everything we need here in Maple Ridge.

#### MISSION WHO GROUP

The Mission group was started in March of 1984 with 10 members and now has over 30 members. Our first executive was formed of volunteers. We are not a money-raising club, mostly due to our free rent; however, we support the transition house with money and hampers, groceries, paper goods, etc.

Members have lunch together once a month, either going out or having it catered in our meeting room. The group has had some interesting speakers. Meetings are thoroughly enjoyed and some play scrabble, some Yahtze, and some card games after lunch. Outings have included trips to the harness races, also Fantasy Gardens, and of course Expo. A trip to the Langley Chapter was a highlight -- we even danced the chicken dance and had lots of fun. All in all this is a very happy group of W.H.O.'s who meet every Thursday morning at the Leisure Centre from 10:30 to 12:30 p.m. There are now over 30 members, all very special women.

### SURREY WHO GROUP

The Surrey group was founded by the current president with 4 people attending the first meeting at the YMCA. Since that time membership has fluctuated from 40 to 75 members. Due to the vast concerns of our membership a decision was made to reach out to the widowers of the community. Our motto is "we care" and our functions are varied:

- reaching out to the newly bereaved
- counselling by giving meaning to oneself
- arranging socials to promote friendship
- offering information regarding legal aid, consumers' rights, pensions
- promoting involvement in the community, such as Red Cross, Hospice
- supporting one another in areas of loneliness, depression, isolation.

### WHITE ROCK WIDOWS' SUPPORT GROUP

In June of 1981 representatives from local church groups, the Senior Citizens' Activity Centre, and community service clubs in the White Rock/ South Surrey area met to discuss the need for a widows' and widowers' support group. Four of the widows who became members that first year are still members of our group today. After three organizational meetings, an executive was elected. By 1982, there were 46 members and this increased slightly to 52 members in 1987.

At the present time, we meet in Room 4 at the Star of the Sea Centre on Pacific Avenue in White Rock. This room is a drop-in centre for members and guests, Tuesday through Saturday, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. One member acts as hostess, serving tea, cookies, and any other goodies she might care to provide. Members are asked to put \$.25 in a donation box to pay for the coffee,

tea and cookies that are always on hand. On days when we have lunch, dinner, or outings scheduled, we do not have the drop-in open.

Our social activities include going out for lunch and dinner once a month. We also schedule a birthday party and a pot luck supper at our meeting room. When the weather permits, we plan days out for a picnic, a day at Horseshoe Bay, Queen Elizabeth Park, a museum, or anything else that seems of interest.

Our goals are to help the new widow by just being available for one-on-one conversations where she can open up and talk of her bereavement and the problems it has created for her. Since all of us are widows with similar experiences, we can offer friendship and suggestions that may help. The group was open to both widows and widowers for the first couple of years, but it was finally decided to have it be a widows group only. The original name was Widows Helping Others (W.H.O.) but in 1987, our name was changed to Widows Support Group.

In summary, while each group has its own unique character reflecting the needs and skills of its membership and the particular community in which it originates, all have a common function to provide support to women on their own, with the Surrey group being the only one to reach out to men. Support is given on an individual basis and/or through involvement in the social activities of the group.

As part of reaching out to help others, the Langley group developed a plan to create a larger network of support for widows around the province and across the country. Through their initiatives, the first provincial conference for widows in British Columbia became a reality.

**WIDOWS HELPING OTHERS . . . COMMUNITY BUILDING  
AND NETWORKING CONFERENCE  
(W.H.O. C.A.N. CONFERENCE)**

Holiday Inn, 711 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.  
April 29th, 30th and May 1st, 1988

**REGISTRATION FORM**

Please type or print:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
Surname Name

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

**REGISTRATION FEE:**

..... \$25.00  
\$30.00

Cheque or money order  
Total Fee Enclosed

Registration Includes:

- Friday Night
- All Sessions
- Dinner on Sat.
- Coffee Break
- Workshop Handouts

**SATURDAY SESSIONS:**

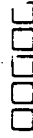
Maximum 35 people  
Please indicate (x) your choice  
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

- A1 You and Your Family
- A2 Handling Your Anger
- A3 Our Confused Feelings
- A4 Money Matters
- A5 Rebuilding Relationships
- A6 Grief
- A7 Moving On; Community Building
- A8 Self-Discovery

**COMMUNITY BUILDING AND  
NETWORKING CONFERENCE  
(W.H.O. C.A.N. CONFERENCE)**  
**April 29th, 30th and May 1st, 1988**  
**Holiday Inn, 711 West Broadway**  
**Vancouver, B.C.**

the afternoon.

noon



**CANCELLATION POLICY:**

Full registration fee will be refunded less handling charges if cancellation received before March 15, 1988.

Please make a photocopy of this form for your records.

Mail the completed form to:

Mrs. Doreen Brame  
W.H.O. C.A.N. Conference Committee  
20930 - 45th Avenue  
Langley, B.C.  
V3A 3G5  
Telephone: (604) 534-9821  
Message Tel.: (604) 530-0564 (Eileen Weald)  
(604) 278-6902 (Pam Gill)

## THE WHO CAN CONFERENCE

### GETTING US ALL TOGETHER...

The culmination of the efforts of these seven groups, the W.H.O. C.A.N. Conference (for 'widows helping others community-building and networking') was held April 29, 30, and May 1, 1988, at the Holiday Inn on Broadway in the city of Vancouver. The conference was designed to bring together widows from around the province to share their experiences, to learn from each other, to highlight issues and concerns, and to plan future directions for widows support.

### A PRETTY AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING...

The conference offered keynote speakers, entertainment, a banquet on Saturday night, a variety of workshops presented by skilled professional facilitators, and a chance to spend a weekend in the big city of Vancouver.

### WHO WAS THERE...

There were 145 women at this first ever provincial widows' conference. While the event was promoted to 'all women on their own', only 7 of a total of 81 conference evaluation questionnaires were from divorced or single women. The typical delegate was 67 years old, widowed and on her own for more than 3 years, retired and a member of a widows group.

The table that follows summarizes who was there...

Total registered	147
Total attending	145
Total evaluations completed	81 (response rate - 55.9%)
Age:	range 43 - 84
	median 67
	average 67.1
	% over 65 71.9
Marital status:	widowed 73
	divorced 6
	single 1
Length of time alone:	more than 3 years 50
	1 - 3 years 19
	less than 1 year 6
Work status:	retired 49
	volunteer 23
	employed 7
	looking for work 2

In addition to the seven groups previously described, there were representatives from:

- the LIFE Resource Centre
- the Widows network on the North Shore
- the Cowichan Group

There were 6 people attending who had been involved in starting groups and of those who were not members, a number said they planned to get involved in a group following the conference.

While the vast majority were from the lower mainland of British Columbia, there were women from Vancouver Island, the Interior, and Prince George, as well as from Saskatoon and Montreal. We were fortunate to have two people attending from the national Widow-to-Widow organization; Trudy Friedman, President, and Jessica Easton, Vice-president.

## SETTING THE TONE...

On the eve of the Conference, the opening comments set the tone and framed the challenges of the weekend. Chairperson, Elma Tolliday 'tossed in the first ball'. She spoke to us of a growing sense of social consciousness toward other needy people in our society. The W.H.O groups are a prime example of an informal group of people with common experiences helping each other in the healing process. Widows' support groups offer a place for women to come together and support each other. Given an atmosphere of compassionate understanding, we can all become stronger and reach out to help others.

This conference brings us all together to enjoy learning, discuss our concerns and plan for the future. Elma told us New Horizons looks to us to point the way for future developments in programs for widows. Furthermore, we have the opportunity at this first provincial widows' conference, to be an example to other groups in Canada.

THAT'S QUITE A CHALLENGE YOU GAVE US, ELMA.

Heather Fraser was on hand to clarify the role of New Horizons in assisting the widows' support movement. The Seniors' Independence Project grants from Health and Welfare total 20 million dollars each year for five years. This represents a major expansion of New Horizons' role in the development of seniors' programs...and because of the growing number of older widows, it represents a greater source of opportunity and support for widows' projects. HEATHER'S MESSAGE WAS TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES.

## GETTING US GOING ON SATURDAY MORNING...

On Saturday morning Libby Davies, Alderwoman for the City of Vancouver, created a broader framework for widows' support. She said, "We are talking about women being more in charge of their own lives, coming together and sorting out issues and building on our common strengths and concerns. This conference crosses age barriers and marital status. We are dealing with the universal problems of loss and separation that women have always endured. Years ago, however, women dealt with problems and grief in isolation. Now...we come together and share. We are given resources and opportunity with the conviction that we can, with a minimum of professional help, determine our own priorities and take charge of our own lives. Libby's message was...

## BEGIN NOW AT THIS CONFERENCE WITH HELPING YOURSELF...

THEN YOU CAN BE HELPFUL TO OTHERS.

## THE CHALLENGE TO BE A LEARNER

Our major task was to make the most of this opportunity to learn all we could from the professionals and from each other. On Saturday we got down to some serious business. Each "delegate" was given the opportunity to attend two out of a total of seven workshops. The workshop themes had been carefully chosen by the Board to address issues commonly experienced by widows:

How can I get beyond the sadness?

How do I deal with my anger?

How can I look after my financial future?

How can I relate to my family as a single parent?

Who am I and what do I have to offer others?



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS

If you had been a fly on the wall at each of the workshop sessions, this is what you would have heard.

OUR CONFUSED FEELINGS ABOUT GOD was cochaired by Elsie Palmer, reality therapist, and Edith McLellan, United church minister and chaplain. This group began, like most, with introducing each other and why we had come. The various reasons given were:

- curiosity
- to share ideas
- to reaffirm and clarify beliefs
- uncertainty about feelings
- to find answers to questions such as 'why me?'

and 'why all this suffering in the world?'

Elsie began by giving a brief summary of the grief process and the relationship of grief to feelings about God. We all shared personal feelings and questions unanswered.

\* ISSUE - Two in the group were torn between 2 different churches.

There are so many churches to choose from - how does one choose?

Group solution - Why choose? Why not go to as many as you want - get what you need where you find it. Some said God was no longer connected to a church for them, but was everywhere.

\* ISSUE - Why is there so much grief and suffering?

Group solution - Some were able to rationalize, others had difficulty.

Some agreed that 'asking why' never helped

anybody. The solution was to accept and get on with life.

In conclusion, we learned that everyone has different ideas and we can accept each other's differences. We also have something in common --

WE ARE ALL SEARCHING TO FIND OUR OWN RELATIONSHIP WITH A GOD OF OUR UNDERSTANDING WHO CAN GIVE US STRENGTH AND COMFORT.

ACCORDING TO THE HINDHU PHILOSOPHY, PEOPLE BELIEVE WHAT THEY CHOOSE TO BELIEVE FOR THE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT THEY ARE IN.

Elsie closed with a story about A little boy whose cat had died. His Grandma was very concerned, anticipated how upset he would be and wanted to soften the blow. She said "Davey, your cat has gone to heaven". The little boy thought for a few minutes and then he said:

"But Grandma, what would God want with a dead cat?!"

Children have a refreshing way of 'telling it like it is'. There is much we can learn from them.

MONEY MATTERS was the workshop presented by Geraldine Thorlakson, retired educator with expertise in financial planning. The group received valuable information on how to cope with finances. We learned about RRSP's, RIF's and RAF's. We were urged to establish our present situation and our future needs, and to set financial goals. The discussion and sharing of experiences highlighted the following points.

- Women need to be more assured that we have, many of us, always coped with financial matters and we are capable.
- A must - don't make any decisions in a hurry and don't let anyone push you into making decisions.
- Of interest, most of our security is in our homes and therefore housing options is an important issue.
- Tax laws and financing are constantly changing and we need to stay abreast, read, consult, and take courses.

How many of us know:

How will the new income tax affect us?

How might the new LTcare financing system affect us?

ALL WOMEN, MARRIED OR SINGLE, NEED TO BE ABLE TO MANAGE THEIR OWN FINANCIAL AFFAIRS AND THERE IS MUCH TO BE LEARNED.



YOU AND YOUR FAMILY was facilitated by Jessica Easton, a practicing grief counsellor, who began by describing the family circumstances following the death of a loved one. At about three months she said there is a change in that support network and a change in feelings. The basis for much of the discussion surrounded feelings during that stage. This is a time when "there is a need for the widowed to declare independence from the family". The task is:

- to make meaning
- to change where we are
- to develop compassion for ourselves  
and for others.

Finally, we learn we can endure. To do so we must learn to risk again.

To risk new beginnings we need a lot of support:

- self-support (courage, determination)
- belief-support (confidence, I can do it)
- environmental-support (professional, peer, group)

An interesting aspect of this group was the exploration of grief rituals. Our society collectively does not have many established grief rituals and therefore we have to develop our own little rituals even if they may seem bizarre to others. We may visit a special place on a regular basis and converse with a loved one we have lost...we scatter ashes...we develop our own little sacred shrines.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO CREATE PERSONAL RITUALS THAT HAVE MEANING FOR US.

HANDLING YOUR ANGER was handled by Ellen Tallman, a psychologist and group therapist. This was another excellent group counselling session with lots of opportunity for discussion and sharing. Ellen lead an exploration of different kinds of anger and an experiential exercise asking us to relive the last time we were angry. Her suggestion was to help us, as she put it, 'get to know your anger better' and deal with it. Don't put it away or put it off expecting it to go away by itself. We need to pay attention to the anger and understand it. If there is guilt involved, for instance, we don't have to accept the guilt and we may need to learn how to get rid of it.

HOW CAN A SUPPORT GROUP HELP US TO DEAL WITH ANGER?

THE GROUP CAN PROVIDE UNDERSTANDING, TRAINED PEOPLE WHO HAVE TIME TO LISTEN AND KNOW HOW TO GIVE THE RIGHT KIND OF SUPPORT.

THE ONUS IS THEN ON EACH INDIVIDUAL TO BE WILLING TO SHARE FEELINGS.



REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. Adult educator Kathy Gose was our facilitator and a number of interesting issues were raised. In general, widows experience the following problems with relationships:

- we suffer from feelings of not fitting in
- we have inaccurate perceptions of the past
- we need to find a kindred spirit.

For younger widows there are different concerns, such as raising children on our own. In the final analysis, however, we agreed age was irrelevant. Personal circumstances and interests were the important differences between us.

Again and again discussion returned to feelings of self-worth. As a group we widows are just too hard on ourselves.

Obstacles to moving on and building new relationships:

- too many 'shoulds'
- societal expectations
- personal expectations
- overprotective families
- a feeling of not belonging
- anger and guilt
- lack of social skills
- self-pity.

~~I should go out more~~  
~~I must put on a brave front~~  
 Why me? You can always  
 come with us, Mom

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THOSE WHO REALLY UNDERSTAND US TO:

- recognize our strengths
- begin to love ourselves
- get on with new activities and new relationships

MOVING ON: COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND NETWORKING. Beverley Burnside, researcher in social network theory from UBC, began with some hard data on the relationship between health and support systems. She emphasized the value of a large social network to personal health.

To live a longer healthier life, we need 3 things:

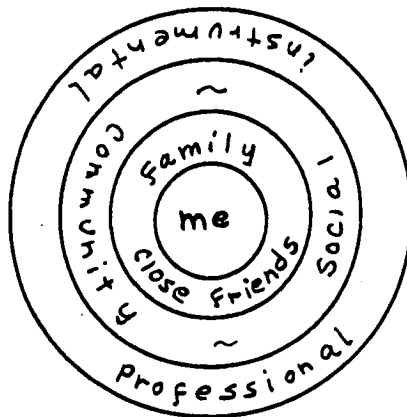
- a large number of friends
- a confidant
- a connection with a community organization.

Beverley gave us a map of social networking and we used diagrams as a tool to evaluate our own social networks. The important task for each one of us is, of course, to strengthen our individual social networks -- which is exactly what this conference is all about. You may not think all that eating and drinking and staying up half the night at conferences can make you healthier, but it can!

Of note, Beverley suggested that,

WITH RESPECT TO THE FAMILY, THE WIDOW'S ROLE SERVES NO USEFUL PURPOSE AND THEREFORE WE NEED TO:

- MOVE BEYOND THE FAMILY IN ESTABLISHING NEW ROLES
- CREATE A USEFUL ROLE AS A SINGLE PERSON WITHIN OUR FAMILY SYSTEM.

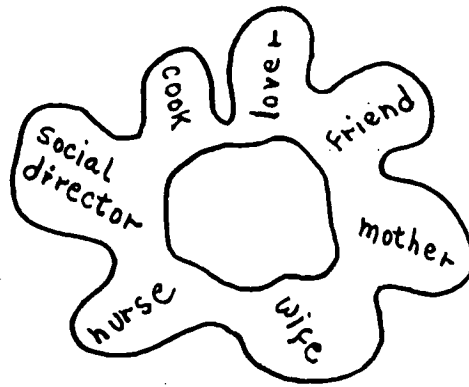


SELF-DISCOVERY was facilitated by gerontologist Gloria Levi. Gloria focused on the importance of our sense of who we are and its relationship to the roles we have throughout life. When we suffer a role loss, such as loss of our mate, we feel ~

- rejected
- abandoned
- not needed
- ??? what else????

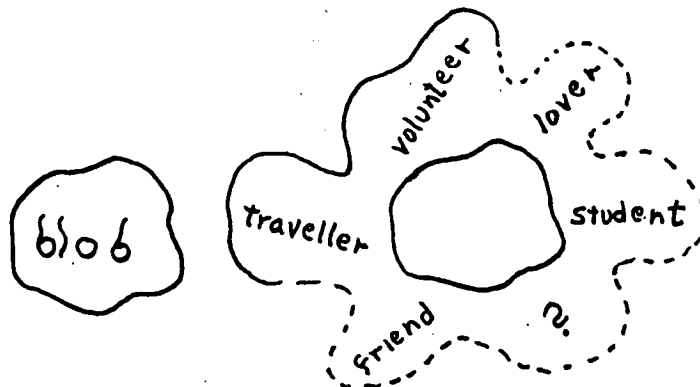
And when we feel this way, we need support and encouragement.

Participants were encouraged to visualize themselves in the shape of an amoeba or starfish with a number of projections or bumps representing different roles:



When we lose a spouse, we lose a number of bumps all at once, particularly if that person we lose is the centre of our lives. And, without the bumps, we become blobs!!! Do you know what it feels like to feel like a blob???

The task is to grow new bumps, eg. create new roles --





And while we're growing these bumps we need a lot of support and encouragement because:

- building bumps means taking risks
- confiding our feelings is risky
- making new friends is risky
- building bumps takes courage

BUT the rewards are incredible. Gloria urged us to learn to live with uncertainty. Life is full of surprises -- and many of them good ones.

BEGIN TO TAKE SOME RISKS AND YOU, TOO, MAY BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED.

SO...WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE WORKSHOPS?

We had the privilege of being with some incredibly skilled and knowledgeable workshop leaders and the evaluations reflected an appreciation for that. Of interest, what people enjoyed most was sharing thoughts and feelings and learning how very much we have in common. By listening to others, we learned about ourselves.

Of least interest were discussions about grief. As one widow said:

"Grief, we've had it! It's time to move on".

But before we can move on we must let go of the past and forgive ourselves for not being perfect. We need to say to ourselves, 'I have done the best I can and I am the best I can be. And if I'm good enough for me, then I'm good enough for you

...and you

...and all of you.

## THE CHALLENGE ON SUNDAY MORNING...

## AGING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

An inspirational message from Edith McLellan, United Church Minister.

I believe there is challenge and opportunity for spiritual growth that is unique to those who are growing older. There is a moment of realization that the rest of living will not be more of the same, not a re-run of the years already lived, there will not be any great accumulation of new knowledge or experience, but we may become more intentional and attentive about our relationships, involvement, our growth and our time.

We may be aware of the pains and the rewards of spiritual and emotional maturity. Our questions become spiritual ones - to do with the basic meaning of life, the problems of pain, illness, grief, and death. We begin to encounter our own limitations, and we become aware of our own mortality. We come to know in a very personal way that we are not absolute beings but mortal ones. Shakespeare called us "actors on the stage of life". That may bring dread to some, but those feelings which are very normal may be the turning point toward a more significant stage on our human journey. We all remember when time stretched far ahead, but by mid-life that carefree sense of time ceases. When we begin to count time backward from the end of life, not the beginning, we ask how the time NOW may be fruitful, useful and happy. It is the time of turning self around and seeing things in a different light. It is a period of new growth.

The losses of mid-life cannot be minimized. I have not found it easy to leave that young 22 year-old behind. Like everyone else I have known disappointment, adjustments, griefs, and some suffering. I finally have a sense of what my life is and was. And I believe the negative experiences are also learning experiences, as I allow the more youthful dreams to be replaced by new possibilities. The deepest place in the human is that centre of yearning, rebellion and hope. Our inward journey is in the acceptance of whatever is reality, in that yearning, rebellion, and hope, and in our response to ourselves, our loved ones, and our community.

Many women, and men as well, deny their aging. Our media, TV, fashions, leisure activities, all are aimed at the "young at heart" and modern literature and entertainment are full of characters who are middle-aged adolescents. It takes guts and faith to let go of youth, to abandon some illusions and dreams, and to take up the brokenness of human life in a new way. We begin a whole new time of discovery where we integrate experience, wisdom and knowledge. We find new strength, new possibilities, new acceptance, and we see the world as both evil and good, but without losing our commitment to continue to help make it a better world. There can be new purpose and vision as we begin a new part of this spiritual journey. And we know the wise ones of our time, our shamans, are the mature folk in our community who know the histories, the struggles, the errors, and the learnings of the past. And they need to be on centre stage where decisions are being made, because they can make their contribution with less to lose personally, and do so with a more balanced and reasoned perspective.

I believe we cannot generalize about our fellow humans, except to believe that we share many traits and norms in our development. Each of us has unique experiences whether of opportunities, or relationships, or losses, and each of us responds individually, because each of us is unique. But, we finally know one another as we learn of one another's stories, and we understand ourselves better when we tell our story to others.

In our individual journeys we cross long level places where the going is smooth, we may camp in pleasant pastures for a time, but we also may have crossed burning desert wastes where the path was not clear. We may have encountered steep hills, and roaring rivers to cross. The changes in our lives are transition points, which put us to the test! Not all transitions will be equally hard, nor will we each deal with them in the same way. Some common transitions we could face in our maturing are finding new ways to use time, new ways of relating to a spouse when the nest becomes empty. We may need to work out new ways of relating to our children when they are grown and independent. We may need to find new outlets for our energies, even new social roles when retirement comes: so much of our identity is rooted in our work that we may face an identity crisis when we no longer work. We may have to learn to be single again - to live alone, or to consider new forms of living arrangements. Moving may disrupt familiar relationships and connections and mean new medical help, new services, etc. Some of us will need to come to terms with physical limitations that we didn't have in earlier years. So much of change is accompanied with pain and grief, until the period of reorganization comes when we can look again to the future, love and laugh once more, and know life to be good.

Living through transitions calls for courage, and that's not just absence of fear, but is the capacity to use that inner strength that follows out of our will to live. Faith also grows out of that learned expectation that life moves from one stage to another as we journey, and that gives us hope. So we test our resources and discover our strengths, and we become excited about the changing views along our journey; we withstand the pain, and face the terror, and know of our capacity to survive. If we can accept change and recognize that there will be these transition times, we can be strong to move on and reorganize our lives in new ways. We cannot go back, we can only go forward. We aren't the first to travel this way, we are part of a long line of pioneers carrying on the mission of the human race, until we all make it to the end of the journey when we face the last transition.

Robert Browning wrote to Elizabeth Barrett,

"Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be,  
The last of life for which the first was made."

I wish you acceptance and courage and a graceful continuation of your journey; and I thank you for asking me to join my journey with yours.

CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Your feedback will help us formulate future directions for widows' support in British Columbia. Please take the time to share your experience and suggestions. All information will be considered confidential.

What did you learn?

To create a new me -  
no looking back.

We must stick together & help each other

How strong that common bond  
is between widows

How to build new bumps! and extend your network. Also everyone needs a hug and a friend.

That it helps to talk to others in the same situation

TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE AND  
GETTING & INVOLVED WITH OTHERS

THE WORKSHOP ENHANCED MY  
AWARENESS. GAVE ME SOME - A LOT - OF HOPE  
FOR MY FUTURE.

## WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE AT THE CONFERENCE?

The mood throughout the conference was warm and positive. The conference evaluations confirmed our feeling that this had been a highly successful event...it also provided valuable insight into how we could improve the next conference experience. For despite one very positive person who wondered..."how can you improve perfection?", we know we can always make things better the next time.

But, let's begin with the bouquets. In response to the question, 'What did you enjoy most about the conference', the most frequent responses were predictably social (31), however, a total of 13 specifically said 'making new friends'. Of interest, the next most frequent response related to the workshops. Also important was the friendliness (9) and the warmth (6). As one widow put it, "You had to be here to believe the warmth." The table below summarizes what people felt they had enjoyed most about the conference.

response	response frequency
social:	41
fellowship	16
making new friends	13
sharing	7
meeting other women	5
cognitive:	26
learning/workshops	11
exchanging ideas	5
speakers	4
inspirational talk	4
summary of workshops	2
psychological:	20
friendliness	9
love/warmth	6
positive/happy atmosphere	3
common bond	2
physical/recreational:	8
the banquet/entertainment	5
catering	1
relaxation/fun	2

## WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE CONFERENCE?

Responses to 'what did you learn?' fell logically into the three traditional domains of learning: personal or psychological, interpersonal or social and cognitive. The most frequent response related to increased self-awareness and self-confidence. Some illustrative comments were:

"My thoughts have been clarified".

"I learned I am on the right track".

"What a boost to one's ego this has been".

"I learned that there is a bright future for me".

The table below summarizes what participants felt they had learned.

response	response frequency	
personal/self:		27
there is a bright future for me	6	
that I am not alone	3	
self-awareness	3	
I'm on the right track	2	
I feel better about myself	2	
to enjoy life to the fullest	2	
other	9	
interpersonal/social:		19
how to be more helpful to others	7	
we need each other	3	
there is work to be done	3	
younger widows need help	2	
groups are important	2	
the value of networks in rebuilding our lives	2	
how strong that common bond!	2	
we've all had similar feelings	2	
cognitive/knowledge and skill:		10
building new relationships	4	
insight into others problems	2	
to keep on learning	2	
how to deal with anger	1	
money matters	1	



## SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT TIME...

Suggestions from the questionnaire to improve future conferences related essentially to two areas, the conference agenda and publicity. Ten suggested more workshops, 7 more advanced information about the workshops. With respect to publicity, it was suggested that newspapers be used more and that advertising be designed to appeal to a broader group, to younger widows(5), men(3), and all women on their own(1).

A number of interesting topics were suggested for the future:

- more on networking (4)
- advanced workshops for those on their own longer (3)
- how to reach isolated and lonely
- how to develop a support group
- information on services for women
- second marriages
- coping with feelings
- career options
- housing
- travel
- memory

On the whole, we concluded that the conference was an unqualified success, providing an opportunity for widows to expand their social contacts and gain added knowledge and skill, thus revitalizing themselves and their groups. As one said, "I plan to get more involved", and another, "Conferences engender new enthusiasm".

## BEGINNING THE JOURNEY FROM GRIEF TO JOY

There was a sense, as the conference drew to a close, that this had been a powerful experience for many, the beginning of a brighter future. There was an atmosphere of optimism and fellowship that was quite tangible. As one widow expressed it: "I feel blessed. I am overwhelmed by what I learned."

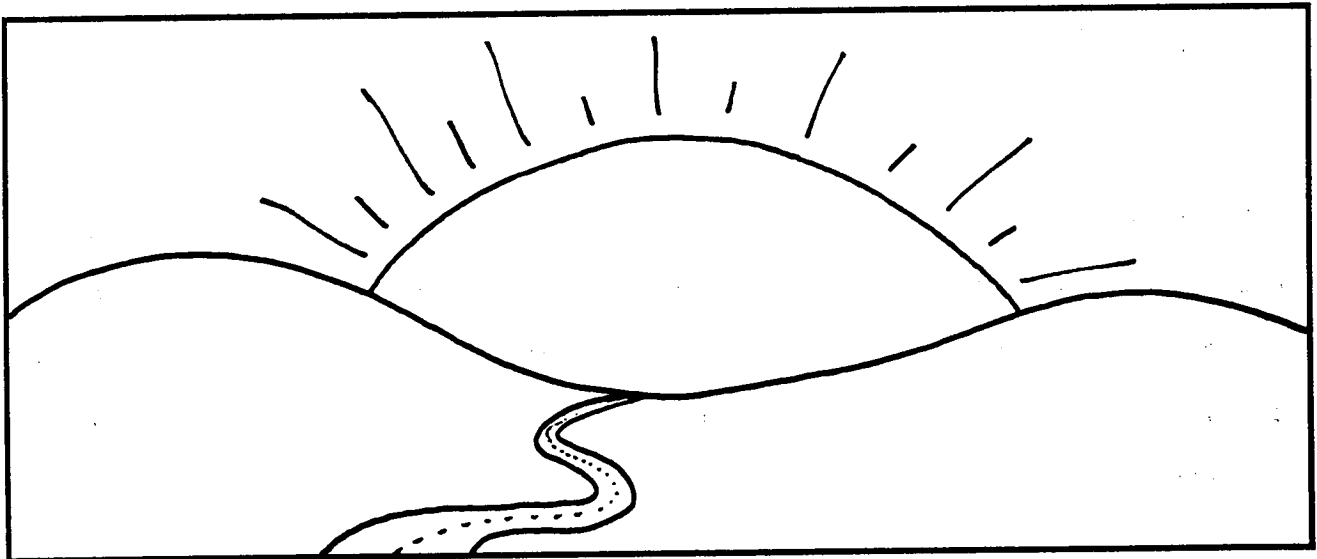
... and another, "I learned there is a bright future for me".

... and another, "This is a powerful beginning".

There was a sense of the beginning of that transition, expressed so beautifully by Wylie (1977)... the transition from grief to joy.

Joy does not mean riotous glee but it does mean purposive employment of energy in a self-chosen enterprise. It does mean pride and self-confidence. It does mean communication and cooperation with others, based on delight in their company and your own...to have something to desire to make, to achieve and at last something genuine to give.

(Wylie, 1977, p. 16)



## CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

## A RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE

From the W.H.O. C.A.N. Conference experience and the variety of evaluation procedures, it is possible to make a number of recommendations for the future of widows' support groups in British Columbia. These recommendations fall appropriately into two areas reflecting the acronym CAN -- those relating to community-building and those relating to networking.

**COMMUNITY-BUILDING:** Widows' support groups function essentially to provide emotional and social support to the widowed within their individual communities. This function, like that of senior peer counselling programs (Petty & Cusack, 1989, in press) supplements professional services, thus strengthening the network of formal and informal support systems. This is a valuable community resource and deserves support and recognition from the professional community.

An important prerequisite to such a service is an adequate meeting place. A number of conference delegates commented on the inadequacy of their meeting place and the group histories are replete with 'moving' from one location to another. At the writing of this report, the Langley group, who are vigorously developing new directions for widows' support, have just learned that they no longer have a drop-in centre in which to meet and must find another 'home'.

While many of the groups appear satisfied with their present social function, many would like to expand their outreach and service potential to include younger women, men, and the disadvantaged. To become an integral part of a community support system, they not only require an office and/or meeting place but they need opportunities for education and training. Training is

suggested in two basic areas: leadership and grief support.

Just as with all community programs for seniors, the ongoing planning and coordination depends on the commitment of a sufficient number of senior leaders/volunteers. A small number of widows worked incredibly hard to plan and coordinate the conference with support from New Horizons and a skilled professional coordinator. There is, however, a need (identified in the evaluations) for more of the membership to be actively involved in the work. The development of confidence and competence can be fostered by education and training that promotes active participation and leadership skills.

There is also a need for training in grief support work. A critical need during the early phase of widowhood, supported by both research and this report, is to talk to someone who has personally experienced widowhood. The senior peer counsellor training program in New Westminster, documented by trainer/coordinator Beryl Petty and evaluator Sandra Cusack (1989, in press) has been effective in preparing older women to act as support to their more needy peers. Many of the widows' support groups mentioned a counsellor associated with the group or members who have natural counselling skill. Many more group members, however, could be trained in generic listening and communication skills as well as skills specific to grief support. This kind of training not only improves the effectiveness of supportive services, but also provides an experience of personal growth. The enthusiasm for learning was evident at the conference and this suggests that education and training might be a priority for the future.

Vachon et. al (1984) stress the value of self-help groups for widows, to which this report lends support. The spread of widows' self-help groups is to be encouraged because it is a low-cost method of providing a much needed service to a large group of bereaved. The most pressing problems, highlighted by Vachon

et. al (1984) and reinforced here, are for an adequate meeting place, materials and resources, training, and personnel to maintain services. Given the large numbers of older widows and the proven effectiveness of peer and group supports, funding to support these fundamental needs should be a high priority for public health.

In view of the proven effectiveness of this approach and the strong indication of continued need and positive response of the community, the survival of such programs should be seen as of utmost importance.

(Vachon et. al, 1984, p. 151)

**NETWORKING:** These groups are serious about creating a network of support for the widowed across Canada. The conference was a beginning. The next step will be the promotion and distribution of the video and resource book. There are plans to provide support to new groups, through personal visits and the use of the video. The groups may also want to actively promote their services to the professional community, (eg. doctors, ministers, therapists).

Finally, one of the most effective ways to develop and consolidate a network is through regular conferences such as this one. Many respondents at the conference suggested it should be an annual event; for the value of a conference goes beyond the benefits of the groups, offering an opportunity to revitalize and inspire on a grand scale.

We know that an involved and active person with a broad social network is a healthy, longer-living person. Therefore, every opportunity must be provided for this large group of people to do for themselves more than can be done by either family support or professional services. This conference was, indeed, a powerful beginning. If, however, its promise is to be realized, there are a number of issues/needs to be addressed by the groups in consultation with the professional community.

## ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED:

THE NEED FOR FORMAL RECOGNITION FROM THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY  
 THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE MEETING PLACES  
 THE NEED FOR TRAINING IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS  
 THE NEED FOR TRAINING IN GRIEF COUNSELLING SKILLS  
 THE NEED FOR OUTREACH TO YOUNGER WIDOWS, MEN, AND THE DISADVANTAGED  
 THE NEED FOR ONGOING SUPPORT, FINANCIAL AND CONSULTATIVE,  
 FROM THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY  
 THE NEED FOR AN ANNUAL PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE

Ongoing professional support is required if this growing social phenomenon is to reach its full potential and secure a solid place in the community network of support. Particular care must be taken to provide professional support that is sensitive to the specific needs and opportunities unique to each widows' support group, allowing for the natural evolution of its membership. This natural evolution is, after all, the essence of self-help. And let us not, in liberating the widowed from a static, nonfunctional role, expect they will now assume aspects of community support that require the skills of a professional.

IT IS THROUGH DIALOGUE AND COLLABORATION AND A CLEAR DEFINITION OF THEIR SEPARATE STRENGTHS THAT SELF-HELP GROUPS AND PROFESSIONALS CAN ACT IN CONCERT TO CREATE A SOLID NETWORK OF SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AND MEN MAKING THE TRANSITION TO SINGLEHOOD.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Special greetings to all who attended our Vancouver conference April 29, 30 and May 1, 1988. The conference was a success and it was a success because 145 of you came from all over British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Seattle to share love, warmth, fellowship and ideas; to make new friends and to explore ways of establishing widows support groups in areas where none exist. We believe we accomplished that and much more.

At the Sunday morning conference get-together there was unanimous agreement that (a) we need an umbrella group and (b) we should explore ways of establishing one as soon as possible. Well, the time has come for us to start moving in that direction. Subsequent to the conference, some important steps have been taken toward creating a provincial umbrella group for widows.

Conference Board Meetings: Meetings were held May 7th, 19th and 20th to discuss future directions with the Langley WHO group's hall serving as temporary headquarters. The Conference Board has been acting as a pro-temp board to raise funds to establish and locate umbrella group headquarters.

Activities: The "pro-temp board" is in the process of developing an advisory committee comprised of representatives from a community service agency. We hope to make use of professional expertise on matters related to the operation of an umbrella group.

We are also in the process of submitting applications to the New Horizons Program and the Seniors Independence Program to establish an adequate headquarters for our umbrella group and to develop and implement the umbrella group program. Our conference coordinator, Pam Gill, has been working as a volunteer to help us in this regard. Once the applications are submitted, we will have three to four months to clarify and organize our program plans.

Correspondence: The cost of postage is a problem and we will, therefore, not be able to keep you as up-to-date as we would like. We ask all of you who are interested to send us your suggestions, creative ideas, and requests for information (along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you require a reply) to me: DORENE BRAME, 20930 - 45A AVENUE, LANGLEY, B.C. V3A 3G5, PHONE: (604) 534 9821.

Video and Resource Book: A top quality video production of the conference (approximately half-an-hour in length) is available at a cost of \$25.00. Our resource book for widows and their support groups, Widows Helping Others: Creating a Brighter Future Together, is available for \$10.00. Copies of the book and the video can be obtained from: FAYE MOORE, SUITE 104 - 5450 - 203RD STREET, LANGLEY, B.C. V3A 5V1, PHONE: (604) 530 5062.

In closing, the Board would like to emphasize the following:

- the current Board is a pro-temp Board
- in terms of membership/programs due consideration will be given to older widows, young widows and all women on their own
- all of you who are interested will have an opportunity to give input into the development of the umbrella group, membership criteria, goals, responsibilities, etc.

When our grant application has been approved, we plan to hold a special reporting meeting and we look forward to seeing many of you at that time. In the meantime, keep in touch...we need your wisdom, encouragement and support. We are all in this together, and together we CAN create a brighter future.

*Dorene Brame*



## RESOURCES: WHO AND WHAT CAN HELP US

We have compiled a directory of support groups and agencies, professionals and publications that you may find helpful.

WIDOWS' GROUPS ACROSS THE COUNTRY  
ALBERTA

Edmonton L.O.S.S. - Loving Outreach for Survivors of Sudden Death  
13308 91st Street  
Edmonton T5E 3P8  
Contact: Ollie Schulz, SW  
(403) 476 7035 or 476 2835

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Abbotsford W.H.O. Group  
Box 594  
Abbotsford V2S 6R7  
Contact: Mary Neish, President  
(604) 853 4916 (evenings)  
859 3677 (daytime)

Chilliwack New Beginnings  
Chilliwack Community Services  
45845 Wellington Avenue  
Chilliwack V2P 2E1  
Phone: 792 4267

Coquitlam W.H.O. Group  
1700 Eden Avenue  
Coquitlam V3J 7K7  
Contact: Phyllis Caffney, Secretary  
(604) 939 0204

Langley W.H.O. Group  
5499 Salt Lane  
Langley V3A 1S4  
Contact: Velma Baker, President  
(604) 534 3126

Maple Ridge W.H.O. Group  
20370 Thorne Avenue  
Maple Ridge V2X 8P9  
Contact: Jean Warner, President  
(604) 465 6175

Mission W.H.O. Group  
34566 Ferguson Avenue  
Mission V2V 6B2  
Contact: Marjorie Thorn, President  
(604) 826 7022

Nanaimo Widows Group  
Christ Community Church  
2221 Bowben Road

Nanaimo  
Contact: Lee Van Shaik

Prince George W.H.O. Group  
Senior Citizens Centre  
4th & Brunswick  
Prince George  
Contact: Florence Timmons, President  
(604) 532 3182

Surrey The Widows' Support Club  
Grace Community Church  
14618 - 110th Avenue  
Surrey V3R 2A9  
Contact: Marie Dorosh, President  
(604) 581 388

Vancouver L.I.F.E. (Living is for Everyone)  
101 - 395 West Broadway  
Vancouver V5Y 1A7  
Contact: Elsie Palmer, Executive Director  
(604) 873 5013

The Widows' Network  
112 - 250 - 18th Street  
West Vancouver V7V 3V5  
Contact: Jessica Easton, Coordinator  
(604) 925 1513

White Rock Womens' Support Group  
15262 Pacific Avenue  
White Rock V4B 4A8  
Contact: Jeanette Edleman, President  
(604) 531 4953  
531 4419 (centre)

#### MANITOBA

Winnipeg Widows' Consultation Centre  
YM - YWCA, Downtown Branch  
447 Webb Place  
Winnipeg R3B 2P2  
Phone: (204) 943 0381

#### NOVA SCOTIA

Halifax Community Contact for the Widowed  
1725 Garden Street  
Halifax B3H 3R5  
Contact: Doris Bryson, President

#### ONTARIO

Hamilton Widow-to-Widow  
75 McNab Street South  
Hamilton L8P 3C1  
Contact: Barbara A. Robb, Adult Ed. Coordinator  
(416) 529 8121

St. Catherines THEOS  
23 Church Street  
St. Catherines L2R 3B4  
Contact: Betty Kossivas

Stratford THEOS  
56 Morrison Street  
Stratford N5A 5I2  
Contact: Rev. Bruce D. Borkquist

Toronto THEOS  
401 Willard Avenue  
Toronto M6S 3R4  
Contact: Joyce Prezioso

Whitby THEOS  
138 Hillcrest Drive  
Whitby LIN 3C2  
Contact: Dorothy McNaughton  
(416) 668 2648

Willowdale THEOS  
38 Orchard View Boulevard - Apt. 1509  
Willowdale M4R 2G3  
Contact: Elsie Eakin

Windsor Bereavement Resources  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
Essex County Branch  
880 Duelllette Avenue - Suite 901  
Windsor N9A 1C7  
Contact: Louise Allen, Bereavement Coordinator  
(519) 255 7440

QUEBEC

Montreal Widow-to-Widow Services  
5500 Westbury Avenue  
Montreal H3W 2W8  
Contact: Trudy Friedman, Coordinator  
(514) 737 6551

CNOW (The Canadian National Organization  
for the Widowed)  
CLSC Metro  
1550 De Maisonneuve W., Suite 430  
Montreal H3G 1N2

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatoon Community Contact for the Widowed  
1254 Crescent Boulevard  
Saskatoon S7M 3W6  
Contact: Edith Apps, Extension and Ed. Convenor  
(306) 382 1690

## PROFESSIONALS

There are a number of very skilled professional facilitators in the Greater Vancouver area. If your group is interested in education and/or training or JUST AN INSPIRATIONAL EXPERIENCE, the following people are outstanding in their field. The workshop leaders from the conference are included in the list that follows. Fees vary and are often negotiable.

Name and address:Professional expertise:

Beverley Burnside, Ph.D.  
Social Health Outreach Program  
c/o Mature Women's Network  
411 Dunsmuir Street  
Vancouver V6B 1X4  
PHONE: 681 3986

Women and depression

Sandra Cusack, M.A.  
Consultant in Adult Education  
27 - 8720 Maple Grove Crescent  
Burnaby V5A 4G5  
PHONE: 925 1513

Developing a cooperative, support group  
Flexing your memory muscle and  
maximizing your learning potential  
Taking control of your own life

Jessica Easton, M.A.  
Grief Counsellor/trainer  
112 - 250 - 18th Street  
West Vancouver V7V 3V5  
PHONE: 925 151

Lay counsellor training  
Children and grief  
Redefining your sexuality  
Recoupling  
Women and anger

Nancy Hall, Ph.D.  
Community Health Educator  
462 West 18th Avenue  
Vancouver V5Y 2B1  
PHONE: 877 1713

Caring for yourself: Recreating a  
healthy lifestyle  
Managing common health concerns -  
stress, anxiety, arthritis, insomnia  
Connecting with your community.

Moyra Jones, P.& O.T.  
Rehabilitation Consultant  
8264 Burnlake Drive  
Burnaby V5A 3K9  
PHONE: 421 1680

Building a memory file  
Dealing with grief surrounding  
a chronic illness  
Rebuilding families following  
a chronic illness

Gloria Levi, M.A.  
Gerontologist  
3856 W. 12th Avenue  
Vancouver  
PHONE: 224 0078

Self-discovery  
What are your resources, internal  
and external

Edith McLellan, B.Th.  
Chaplain & Minister  
7180 #1 Road  
Richmond V7C 1T6  
PHONE: 271 9265

A spiritual approach to grief  
Aging as a spiritual journey

Mary Madsen, M.Ed.  
 Educator/facilitator  
 49 - 8640 Forest Grove Drive  
 Burnaby V5A 4C9  
 PHONE: 420 7287

Women's health issues  
 Menopause  
 Personal empowerment through  
 feminism

Beryl Petty, M.S.W.  
 Peer Counselling Trainer  
 4209 Yuculta Crescent  
 Vancouver V6N 4A9  
 PHONE: 266 1980

Reaching out to make new friends  
 Alone again: Practical tips  
 Maintaining your independence  
 within the family  
 Assertiveness with compassion

Jenny Shaw, B.A., Dip.Gero.  
 Gerontologist  
 3305 W. 11th Avenue  
 Vancouver V6R 2J7  
 PHONE: 737 8446

Storytelling: Creating the story  
 of your life  
 Celebrating the successes in your life

Wendy Thompson, M.A.  
 Educational Consultant in Gero.  
 306 - 1556 Charles Street  
 Vancouver V5L 2T1  
 PHONE: 255 8091

Quality visiting with elderly friends  
 and relatives  
 Communicating like you've never  
 heard before  
 Special communication techniques  
 for hearing, visual, mentally impaired

Geraldine Thorlakson, B.Ed., M.A.  
 Educator/facilitator  
 Cambridge Two  
 103 - 15300 - 17th Avenue  
 White Rock V4A 8Y6  
 PHONE: 536 2602

Moneymatters: Financial planning  
 Housing options

Elma Tolliday, B.A.  
 Group/community Facilitator  
 511 E. 52 Avenue  
 Vancouver V5X 1G8  
 PHONE: 325 5164

Transitions and changing  
 relationships

Jill Watt, R.N.  
 Nurse/consultant  
 7011 Marguerite  
 Vancouver V6P 5G4  
 PHONE: 263 5181

Family caregiving

Lynn Woods, B.S.N.  
 Nurse/educator  
 303 East 44th Avenue  
 Vancouver V5W 1W1  
 PHONE: 325 6022

Helping the healing process  
 The use of relaxation and visualization  
 in healing.

## PUBLICATIONS

The following resource materials are highly recommended by the groups in the Lower Mainland. You may want to add them to your collection.

L.I.F.E. Resource Kit (\$5)  
from the L.I.F.E. Resource Centre  
101 - 395 W. Broadway  
Vancouver V5Y 1A7

The Practical Guide for Widows (\$6)  
Published by the Widows' Consultation Centre  
YM-YWCA, Downtown Branch  
447 Webb Place  
Winnipeg R3B 2P2, Manitoba.

Preparing to Face the Future on Your Own/  
Facing the Future on your Own,  
Published by the Division of Extension and Community Relations  
University of Saskatchewan,  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

## OTHER RECOMMENDED READING THAT MAY HELP

Many widowed have said, "You can't learn anything from books...you have to talk to someone who understands". Others think the right book for you can be very helpful. Books can also serve as a focus for meaningful discussion in your group. In the following list you may find just what you need.

Living With an Empty Chair	Robert Temes (Mandala)	1978
Up from Grief	Bernadine Kreis, Alice Patti (Seaberg)	1977
Widows & Widowhood	James A. Paterson Michael Bisley (Associated Press)	1977
Grief Counselling - Grief Therapy	J. William Worden (Springer Publishing Co.)	1982
Why did Grandpa die? (for very young children)	Barbara Shook Hazen (Golden)	1985
When People Die (for preteens)	Joanne E. Bernstein Stephen V. Gullo (Detton)	1977
Loss and How to Cope with It (for teens)	Joanne Bernstein (Seabury)	1977

Learning to Say Goodbye When a Parent Dies	Eda LeShan (MacMillan)	1976
Talking about Death: A Dialogue Between Parent & Child	Earl A. Grollman (Beacon Press)	1970
The Suicide's Wife	D. Madden (Avon Books)	1979
The Courage to Grieve (re suicide)	Judy Tatebaum (Lippincott & Crowell)	1980
Death, Grief, and Caring Relationships	Richard Kalish (Brooks/Cole Publishing)	1981
Letting Go With Love	Nancy O'Connor (La Mariposa Press)	1984
Healing Grief	Amy Hillyard Jensen (Medic Publishing Co., P.O. Box 89, Redmond, WA 98502, U.S.A.)	1980
Is There Anything I Can Do to Help?	Amy Hillyard Jensen (Medic Publishing Co., P.O. Box 0, Issaquah, WA 98027, U.S.A.)	1980
Beginnings: A Book for Widows	B.J. Wylie (McClelland & Stewart)	1977
Living and Working with Bereavement: A Guide for Widowed Men and Women	Elsie Palmer & Jill Watt (DeKtselg Enterprises Ltd., P.O. Box 6399, Calgary, Alberta T5A 263)	1987
Aging is a Family Affair (2nd ed.)	Wendy J.A. Thompson (NC Press)	1988
Taking Care	Jill Watt & Ann Calder (Self-counsel Press, Vancouver, \$7.95)	1986
Canadian Guide to Death & Dying	Jill Watt (Self-counsel Press)	1974

IN CLOSING, WE WISH YOU SUCCESS ON YOUR JOURNEY. WHATEVER SUPPORT YOU NEED TO HELP YOU TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR YOURSELF, THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT, AND YOUR COMMUNITY...FIND IT

...USE IT

...AND SHARE IT.

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>>>>>>written by: Sandra A. Cusack, M.A.

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