

BRYONY HOUSE 2023-24



ANNUAL REPORT

PROVIDING A SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE AND
THEIR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bryony House (Halifax Transition House Association) acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pay respect to the Indigenous knowledge held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past, present and future.

At Bryony House, we understand that we are all treaty people and bear responsibilities accordingly. We recognize that acknowledgment is hollow without corresponding action. We are committed to reconciliation in all our approaches, seizing every opportunity to reflect, ask questions, and seek guidance and direction from our relationships with Mi'kmaw knowledge keepers. We uphold trauma-informed practices that acknowledge the generational trauma experienced by many Indigenous folks and their families who seek our services. We are devoted to fostering ongoing education among our staff members and actively pursuing avenues to support those we serve.

We also acknowledge that people of African descent have been in Nova Scotia for over 400 years, and we honor and offer gratitude to those ancestors of African descent who came before us to this land.

Board of Directors

Tanya Chedrawy (Chair)
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Toyin Akindoju (Treasurer)
Gabriel Adeoye
Samantha Allen
Natasha Kruitwagen
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Katie Lovett
Jessica Milhausen (Staff)
Michelle Corbett (Staff)

Beth Wallace (Staff)

MISSION

To provide a safe haven for those and their children experiencing intimate partner violence

VISIOX

Thriving communities free of intimate partner violence

VALUES

Dignity and Respect
Empowerment, Empathy, Compassion
Diversity and Inclusivity
Integrity, Accountability and Trust
Safety



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I am thrilled to report that this past year we've continued to build on the previous year's accomplishments.

In May of 2023, the Board and the Executive Director engaged in developing a new strategic plan. This process included engaging key stakeholders, examining the current planning context, conducting a SWOT analysis, revising the mission, developing values, and establishing a clear vision and strategic priorities for the next three years. This plan has helped inform and guide the board as we make impactful decisions for Bryony House. This past fall we welcomed three new Board Directors. We are grateful for the new directors as they bring a new energy and a fresh perspective that is valued. To all my fellow Board Directors, it has been such a privilege working alongside all of you. Thank you for your continued dedication to the Board, and to the mission and vision of HTHA. You have given your time to Bryony House and assisted in moving the organization in a direction that aligns with industry-standard practices while ensuring we maintain the principles of diversity, equitability, and inclusivity. Thank you for all of your hard work. I would like to thank Monika for her leadership over the past couple of years. Under her leadership, we have created a solid foundation of governance that will enable Bryony to withstand any potential future challenges. Importantly, Monika has been working on strengthening our relationships with key stakeholders and community partners. Bryony House is now back to being a member of THANS, the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia. An umbrella association of all violence against women organizations across the province. Being welcomed back into THANS has allowed Bryony to work collaboratively with those organizations, access staff conferences and networking opportunities with other frontline workers, and do provincial advocacy work. This, along with other community engagement partnerships, is vital to the organization and as it continues to strengthen the work being done in supporting those we serve. While the focus of an AGM is generally to celebrate successes over the last year, it is also important to acknowledge that this year has not been without its challenges. We continue to prioritize a healthy workplace at Bryony House. Ensuring that the organization supports the staff through proper HR practices that are staff-centered and from a human rights perspective. Along with recognizing that the work being done by the staff is not easy. The challenges of a housing crisis, increase in call volume, and ever-growing needs of the clients. We as a board are grateful for the staff and all of the hard work and support they provide to the clients.

I have been a member of this Board since 2019. While my time has now come to an end, I am proud of the organization and the changes we have made. The dedication of the staff, never wavering in their service to the clients, I wish you all nothing but continued success moving forward. To the board, I am grateful for all of you and know you will continue to lead positive change through your efforts as Bryony House moves ahead.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This year has been pivotal for Bryony House as we solidified our foundation and stabilized our organization, paving the way for enhanced service delivery and future growth. By leveraging the expertise of our staff and implementing best practices, we ensured robust support for our clients. We also developed a strategic plan with the Board of Directors and expanded our administrative team to better support operations.

Additionally, Bryony House remained actively involved in community collaborations and advocacy groups related to intimate partner violence.

Our shelter underwent significant changes to create a warm, welcoming, and inclusive space. A grant from the city allowed us to showcase local artists Belle DeMont, Manvi Walter, Lorne Julien, and Eben Nwaokpani, bringing joy and life to our walls. Our partnership with IKEA transformed two rooms, introducing calm and tranquility for our clients. While these changes were aesthetic, they greatly impact how our clients and staff feel in the building.

Clients are at the heart of our work. This year, we redeveloped our policies and service delivery with this focus. This could not have been accomplished without the hard work and dedication of the Bryony House staff.

Community engagement and collaboration are vital. The current climate of a housing crisis, rise in intimate partner violence, increased cost of living, the release of the MCC report, and navigating the National Action Plan have all impacted our community- a community Bryony House is proud to be part of. Rejoining the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) has played a significant role in our province-wide support efforts. We all share the responsibility to work collaboratively to achieve the changes we want to see.

My time at Bryony House has involved significant changes across the organization.

Change is never easy and takes time to navigate, adapt and implement. I am immensely grateful for the staff's unwavering dedication. Despite the challenges, our compassionate team provides dignified and respectful support to our clients.

We are profoundly grateful for the financial support of our donors and funders. Much of our work would not be possible without their generosity. To the Bryony House Board of Directors, thank you for your strategic planning and dedication. Heartfelt gratitude to the staff for their impactful and meaningful work. I could not do my job without you.

We extend our gratitude to our community partners who continue to support the greater good in Nova Scotia. In the new year, we look forward to continuing this work, closely collaborating with community partners to contribute, advocate, and inform. It is our hope that each day we continue to work toward ending intimate partner violence

-Monika Hintz

BRINGING ART INTO THE SPACE

Belle DeMont



In the spring of 2023, Bryony issued a call for proposals, inviting artists to submit concepts.

Below are some of the works we are grateful to showcase on our walls.

Manvi Walter





Belle DeMont



Lorne Julien









Eben Nwaokpani



Lorne Julien

Eben Nwaokpani



WOMENS COUNSELORS

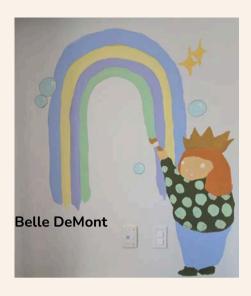
At Bryony House, our Women's Counselors are typically the first point of contact for those who have experienced intimate partner abuse. This contact happens through our crisis lines. Our women's counselors work tirelessly and compassionately to provide 24/7 services such as supportive counseling, resource navigation, safety planning, advocacy, and referrals. This can happen via telephone or on-site within the safety of the shelter.

The women's counselors patiently support each client with whatever their barriers or challenges may be. This past year, we have experienced an increase in admissions of newcomers to Canada. Upon arriving at Bryony House, the assurances by staff that they are in a safe, inclusive, and supportive space, helps those we support sustain a sense of hope.

This past year, the length of stay for our clients has increased to 8-weeks from the previous 6-week limit. The stay may be extended depending on the circumstances that are particular to each client or family. This is in part due to the housing crisis and the challenges that come with finding safe affordable housing. However we are also mindful of the increase in need for service, and our ever growing waitlist. Our staff continually work to allay fears and assist clients in moving forward with things such as child custody, criminal court, child protection, and securing safe housing, to name a few.

Some clients may develop coping strategies to combat the chronic stressors of their situation, while others may be living with, or have developed, anxiety, depression, or other mental health diagnoses as a result of previous trauma, combined with the impacts of abuse and violence. Our knowledgeable women's counselors offer compassionate support using a trauma-informed lens while working under the auspices of harm reduction.

The dedicated women's counselors at Bryony House work tirelessly each day to support those who access our services and make a lasting impacts in the lives of those affected by intimate partner violence.



CHILD CARE TEAM

When children leave their home because of abuse, it is incredibly stressful. This change can create an increase in anxiety, fear, and uncertainty, as they see their parent in distress. Arriving at Bryony House, and being surrounded by strangers can be very scary. Shortly after arrival, the children will meet the Child Care Counselors and be introduced to our amazing playroom or teen lounge. This creates the opportunity for the children to have a moment of fun and curiosity.

The childcare counselors create a safe space for the children to decompress, process, and feel their feelings. The staff's support to the children throughout their stay centers on fostering a fun, creative environment in which the children can play. This comfort and safety can help facilitate the expression of feelings, asking questions, or the sharing of stories.

Our Child Care Counselors recognize the many challenges that children face and address them in a non-intrusive, child-led fashion. This allows the children to have some control over their environment, perhaps in ways that they haven't experienced before, or in a long time. Our Child Care Counselors are committed to helping the families navigate their stay at Bryony House so that eventually they will leave the shelter with a renewed sense of hope, strength, and connection to one another.



COUNSELLING SUPERVISORS

Stella Asumugha & Lori MacInnis

We have been very excited to assume our new roles as Counseling Supervisors since December 2023. The past seven months have provided abundant opportunities for growth and learning through collaboration and training, enriching the skills and knowledge of our frontline Women's Counselors and Child Care Counselors, as well as our own.

Our roles are both rewarding and challenging as we support, brainstorm, and problemsolve with our exceptional teams, whose dedication to our clients is exemplary and unwavering.

Navigating through a trauma-informed lens, with a client-centered approach, and under the auspices of harm reduction, keeps us actively engaged with each other and our clients. We purposefully navigate through a multitude of situations and crises. From children grappling with terrifying suicidal ideation stemming from trauma, upheaval, and uncertainty, to families seeking a place of safety and support amidst challenges like immigration and systemic failings that displace many from their homes, emotions vary widely at any given time. Our staff work diligently and perform commendably to assuage fears, validate feelings and experiences, and educate and support all of our clients in a meaningful and strengths-based manner.

Given the vast knowledge, experience, and expertise of the Bryony House collective, we are committed to forging ahead. We will continue to educate and support those we serve, ensuring their safety as they transition to lives free of abuse.



TRANSFORMING SPACES

We are incredibly grateful to Ikea Halifax for coming to Bryony House and transforming two of our common areas into beautiful peaceful spaces













OUTREACH SUPPORT

The Outreach and Housing program continues to support in-house residents, clients who have recently moved out, or clients who have called the crisis line and are in need of support, but not immediate shelter. For current residents, support looks like planning for next steps- Income Assistance referrals, subsidy applications, December 6 Fund and other forms of financial independence, such as simply opening new bank accounts. The biggest challenge continues to be affordable housing options. There are active community partnerships, such as Alice House, Tawaak Housing, AHANS which have provided clients with second stage housing options, however, there continues to be a large gap in housing options for families and individuals leaving intimate partner violence.

Many outreach clients are involved in family court and support is given throughout each stage- from retaining a lawyer or applying for Legal Aid, help with submitting court forms, referrals, and legal system navigation. There are a number of clients who represent themselves and rely on the FLIP Centre and Family Law Nova Scotia. Clients are made aware at intake, and during appointments that Bryony House does not offer legal advice.

A growing number of clients experience barriers with Immigration status and processing times. Outreach provides support with language barriers, legal system navigation, community referrals and assistance with printing and filling out immigration applications. There is a TRP option for victims of Domestic Violence in Canada, but many clients find they are not eligible. Community referrals and support often require Permanent Residency or Refugee status.

A recent success of the program has been the development of the outreach pantry. As the need for food security continues to grow once clients have secured housing, the outreach pantry allows clients to supplement their grocery bill and stock up on staples at the same time as receiving counselling and ongoing support.

HOUSING SUPPORT

This past year has brought about both challenges and highlights. Navigating a housing crisis means clients are staying in shelter longer than they would have historically. And although limited housing resources contributes to this, it is also the access to the financial means to be able to secure a space. A client may be able to afford the rent, however doesn't have enough for a damage deposit. This, unfortunately has become the experience of most and creates additional barriers in an already challenging situation.

The rising cost of food deeply impacts the families as they move out of shelter into their own spaces. I am grateful that we as an organization have been able to provide access to gift cards for our clients, as well as a food pantry. This allows for us to provide that additional support with food and not add to the financial strain the family may be experiencing.

Working in housing presents its challenges. It can be demanding and stressful. Yet, with each successful placement, I am reminded of the profound impact of this work.



OPERATION SUPERVISOR

-Khaleiha Cunningham

Having transitioned in the role of Operations Supervisor in the fall of 2023, my focus within this role has been the coordination and supervision of daily operational activities within the shelter and assisting with the development and implementation of operational policies and procedures that meet the organization's goals.

I also have the privilege of supervising and leading a dynamic team of operational staff consisting of Household Coordinator-Carlene and Chef Greg, who help streamline and maintain the efficiency of the shelter's operation. On July 10th, we welcomed Chef Greg to our team at Bryony House on a full-time basis. Chef Greg, having ample experience with a variety of international cuisines including French, Asian, Indian, Fusion and more; has been able to offer an expanded meal service for clients of Bryony House. A highly skilled baker, his freshly baked goods are frequently requested by clients young and old. Under the guidance of Chef Greg and our household coordinator Carlene we have also introduced culinary showcases within the shelter allowing clients the opportunity to prepare meals for fellow residents.

Through support of our Household Coordinator, we have created a stronger and more comprehensive approach to supporting our clients well being by meeting their housing needs and providing daily necessities as they navigate life within the shelter. With a holistic approach to shelter adaptation, in partnership with IKEA we were able to remodel both our Quiet and Meditation spaces creating a safe space and place of solace for women and children.

With a focus on community building both internally and externally and through generous donations and volunteer assistance, we have also been able to implement a client outreach food pantry, and maintain the organization of the building, A special thank you is extended to all donors and volunteers of Bryony House!

We are so appreciative of Chef Greg and Carlene for their contributions to Bryony House thus far and look forward to a great new fiscal year.

HUMAN RESOURCES

--Ashley Kelsick

As we reflect on the challenges and triumphs of the past year, I am proud to say that our team has remained resilient in the face of this transitional phase in our organization's journey. Together, we have navigated the necessary changes involved in building capacity and continued to provide services to meet the ever evolving needs of those we serve.

Our success in fulfilling the vital mission of Bryony House hinges on the passion, dedication, and expertise of our staff. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a workplace where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to make a difference. We will continue to foster professional development within our organization and prioritize employee well-being.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Bryony House and our mission. Our collective efforts will continue to drive positive change and create a brighter future. Together, we are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those who are impacted by intimate partner violence in our community.









RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

This year we celebrated the retirement of Sheila Davis, who for over 27 years supported the children who came to stay at Bryony House as a child counselor. Sheila, thank you for your years of service to the organization, but more importantly the dedication, compassion, and kindness you showed to the children. The impact you have made over the years is admirable and we are so grateful for you. Congratulations and thank you!



THANK YOU

A thank you to all Bryony House staff. We are so grateful for all the work you do and your commitment to the organization.

10 Years or Less

Khaleiha	Stella
Jessica	Ashley K
Mahedir	Michelle
Kaitlyn	Courtney
Kathleen	Greg
Elizabeth	Perpetue
Carlene	Sonya
Sarah	Katherine
April	Juliet
Kim	Adrianna
Nicole	Taylor
Funmilola	Ashley
Dale	Abigayle
Ifeanyi	Alicia
Kenda	Tameika



11-40 Years

Maureen Sandra Elizabeth Carolyne Terry Lou Lori

BRUNCH FOR BRYONY

with Neville and David

In November, we gathered with more than 200 community members for our sold-out Brunch for Bryony event. We are grateful for our auction donors. guests, and volunteers, who helped make this event an afternoon to remember AND a success! We are so thankful for all of our supporters, especially our presenting sponsors, My Mothers Bloomers, Neville MacKay, and David MacFarlane. Their commitment, passion, and enthusiasm helped us successfully reach our goal. Together, with the support of everyone who joined us and gave generously, we were able to raise over \$18,000.00. These funds help support our programs and services offered at the Bryony House Shelter.







Save the date:
November 24th,
2024 on your
calendars for this
year's Brunch for
Bryony which will be
held in a new
location that will not
disappoint.

Tickets will sell fast. Watch for the event launch on our social media channels.

Joyce MacKay Award of Hope

During the Brunch for Bryony event, we recognize an individual and a business/group who throughout the years have shown their commitment to the work we do at Bryony House through volunteer engagement, financial support, and being a champion in the community.

This year we presented this award to Denise Hirtle and Shoppers Drug

This year we presented this award to Denise Hirtle and Shoppers Drug

Mart.



Bryony House knows no cheerleader that is more dedicated and committed to offering of their service to our organization over the last 20 years. She has contributed so much to Bryony and we are so grateful for Denise.

Ghada Gabr and her team at Shoppers Drug Mart provide support to Bryony House in countless ways. By raising funds, providing auction baskets, naloxone training and most notably the Giving Women's Shelter Campaign in October. We are so grateful for this partnership.







YOU helped us support nearly 100 women and their families this holiday season. Our holiday program supports those who are in shelter for the holidays or who used the services at Bryony House in the last year and provides a helping hand for their first holiday in their new home free from violence.

"I really didn't know how I was going to afford Christmas this year". This is what we heard over and over as women picked up their donations with tears of gratitude. It was clear that the support felt like a true gift and a sign of hope. Thanks to all who donated and sponsored families this holiday season.

CONNECTING THREADS



We were honored when Sandy Small Proudfoot reached out to us from a small town in Ontario offering us her beautiful quilt she created in honor of the lives lost and impacted by the Portapique tragedy. Although Sandy lives in Ontario she says her heart is in Nova Scotia and wanted to provide hope with her 'NS Remembers Quilt".

Thank you to all those who purchased tickets for this beautiful piece of work, and especially to Sandy for sharing her story with us.



"I am eighty-five years old. I have unfortunately experienced domestic violence in my marriage to a longtime friend, who has struggled with their mental health, which increased over the years to the point where it became unsafe for me to continue living with him. I found myself in the position of not being believed. I am now on my own at an age where one would hope not to be. I have trained and volunteered with Victim's Services, and have volunteer in the past with our local women's shelter, Family Transition Place in Orangeville (Ontario). I have designed two wall quilts in regard to domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) and plan a third, as a trilogy to bring awareness to this very serious issue in society today, one that has existed for many years in regard to women and children, some men as well. It is through my work that I hope to make a contribution."-Sandy Small Proudfoot

THANK YOU

To our donors and supporters who generously contributed to Bryony House and believe in our mission.

Adam White affaf el-jakl Aileen Murphy Alan & Sheila Leard

Alida Bundy

Alison Froese Stoddard

Allen Rodger
Alma Tabareh
Alyssa Gouchie
Amanda Sabattis
Amanda Hansen
Amy MacDonald
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Amy Watson
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Barry Landry

Bedford United Church

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Catharine Penney
Celia McAleese
Chantelle Zeller

Charles P Allen High Charmaine Weiss Cherie Kennedy Chris Ryan

Christine MacLean
Christine Hopkins
CMHC

Colby Community Bible Study Ladies

Colby Ladies Group Colin Madden Craig McCormick Craig Cameron Dalhousie

Dan Lynch
Dana Jasper
Daniel Brown
Daniel F McCormick
Danielle Brown

David Muise David Knowles David Haase

Dazzle Charity Bakes
Denate Inc

Denate Inc Denise Hirtle Diane Rose

District 6 Capital Funding

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Kate Redding

Katie Joyce

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Katharine Beaman

Katie Murphy Kayla Hamelin Kelli Burbine **Kenney Family** Kin Club of Halifax Kinette club of Sackville Kinettes-Lower Sackville

Koren Beaman Krista Reage Kristina Caddick Lara Hof Laura MacLellan Leah Gillis Leah Day Leah Gillis Lei Harris **Lenny Poirier**

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Public Service Alliance Canada

Rachael Myette

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Ruth MacKenzie Ryan San Angelo

Sally Gaal

SANDY ARCHIBALD

*Every effort has been made to ensure Sandy Small Proudfoot this is an accurate list of donors. If you Scotia Fuels

Shani Hamilton Greenlaw notice an error or omission, please **Sharon Johns** accept our apology and email us at

funddevelopment@bryonyhouse.ca so we can update our records.

Sheena Baker Shelagh McCorry **Shelley Devitt**

Shelley MacDonald-Parsons

Shirley Tillotson

Shoppers Drug Mart Foundation Sobevs Timberlea

Socks for Shelters

Spencer Family Charity Foundation St Andrews Presbyterian Church St Luke's Anglican Church

Stella Holmes

Stephanie Macinnis-Langley

Sue O'Neill Sue and Stella Susan Ozon Susy Giddy **Sydnie Douglass** Tara MacDonald Tasha MacEachern

The Armview Restaurant & Lounge

The Body Shop

This hour has 22 Minutes

Thomas Lynch Tina Murphy **Tops Group Tracy Creaser**

Ultimate Party and Event Store

Unifor MWF local 1 Unifor Social Justice Fund United Way of Halifax University of NB

Vicki Savoie Victoria Rees Wavne Tully Westiet William Beaman

Woodlawn Church

Woodlawn UCW Woodlawn UCW

WSP E&I Canada

Yvette Carroll

THANK YOU























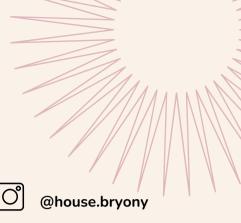


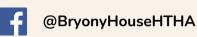
















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