



ANNUAL REPORT

2007–2008

Options for Sexual Health
3550 East Hastings St. Vancouver, BC V5K 2A7
Telephone: 604-731-4252
Fax: 604-731-4698

www.optionsforsexualhealth.org

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OPT's Revelstoke Branch visits the local Slo-pitch tournament.





Members of OPT's 2007–2008 Board of Directors strike a pose at their annual Strategic Planning Retreat. (Bottom row: Dr. Jan Christilaw, Suzie Soman, Barb Hestrin, Carolyn Stewart, Carmen Venturi, Dianna Churchill, and Carly Hall; middle row: Erin Mitchell, Elly Silverman, Gloria Larocque, Leanna Buffie, Jessica Peart (OPT staff), and Margaret McKelvie; top row: Wilson Dillon and Greg Smith)

Some years there's a "big story" to tell in our Annual Report. At other times the big story is really the sum of all the competent, clever, and compassionate acts carried out by volunteers and staff throughout the organization. 2007–08 was a year in which, through many pathways, OPT began to realize the full impact and benefits of major initiatives of the past few years.



Clinical Services

Paps, Plan B, and Papilloma Virus

Physician shortages in some OPT clinics, and the desire to enhance our services to communities, led OPT to increase the training of our nurses so they could do Pap tests. Besides its direct importance, Pap testing is an effective opportunity for discussing other aspects of sexual and reproductive health. With her training, Alison Masters (one of the nurses in the East Kootenay Branch) organized the first “Don’t Poop Out on Your Pap” night for Creston and the nearby community of Bountiful. The event was very successful, and prompted plans in other communities for similar events.



Jessica Peart and Stephanie Sersli, members of OPT's Provincial Office staff, set up the OPT display booth for the 2007 Annual Clinical Services Conference.

Plan B, Canada's only approved emergency contraceptive product, moved from being a prescription drug to “behind the counter” status that could be purchased without a prescription. This change provided more opportunities for OPT to provide Plan B to clients and others on a walk-in basis, and to promote purchase of the product by men as another means of sharing the responsibility for pregnancy prevention.

The development of a vaccine against Human Papilloma Virus

(HPV) infection stimulated considerable discussion about the benefits and implications of school-based vaccination programs targeting females between 9 and 12 years of age. OPT produced a review of the facts and issues in the May 2007 issue of the OPT newsletter, *Facts of Life*; at the time it was the most comprehensive treatment of the subject in the media. The issue attracted praise for the quality of the information and analysis, many requests for wider distribution, and additional media coverage.

New clinics opened in Fort St. James, Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek, and Quesnel under the aegis of the agreement between OPT and the Northern Health Authority. The OPT clinic in Ladysmith closed to coincide with the opening of a new public health centre and a commitment from the Vancouver Island Health Authority that former OPT clients would be served at the new centre. The Ladysmith Branch board continued to support education and outreach activities in the community.



Education Services

“What should I do? My penis is stuck in the vacuum cleaner!”

This was and is a remarkably common question posed by callers to the Sex Sense Line, particularly after school. OPT’s Sex Sense supervisors deal with an astonishing number of such (generally brief) calls—12% of all calls in 2007–08. Many were from adolescents, and the peak periods were at the start of the school year and after school hours during the year. OPT staff treat all callers with equal respect and openness: behind the giggles and silliness are often more important and serious questions waiting to be asked, and we want young callers to have the comfort and trust to ask them at another time.



Lauren Goldman, OPT-Certified Sex Educator, shows off her teaching tools.

This approach, the success of *WontGetWeird*, and the power of OPT’s improved web site combined to attract a significant volume of email questions and inquiries in 2007–08. Overall the number of calls and emails increased by 36% over the previous year, to 11,237. The Yukon YK Style Line, which is operated by OPT under an agreement with Yukon Health, also saw an increase in callers.

Vacuum cleaners played a less prominent role in OPT’s classroom education sessions, but OPT’s open approach to sexual health education continued to draw new and return clients among

school systems, parent groups, and professionals. Bookings and earnings in this program increased by over 25% in 2007–08 compared to the previous year.

So much of the work of sexual health educators involves discussion of healthy relationships. In conjunction with Women Against Violence Against Women, OPT participated in the production of a discussion resource comic called “The Super Power Project”. The resource can be used in classrooms or other settings with youth. A copy was provided to members and other readers of *Facts of Life* in the Winter ‘07 issue.

With funding from Berlex, OPT developed a training course for pharmacists and other health professionals with a focus on how to make the encounter with clients as effective as possible for identifying and addressing other sexual health needs or concerns—more of a dialogue than a transaction. The course involved preparatory study on sexual health, including contraception options, and a values clarification exercise to assist participants in understanding those discomfort points when it would be advisable to refer a client to another provider.



Research Projects

“He who does not research has nothing to teach.” (proverb)

Research is a crucial contributor to OPT’s ability to provide our clients and the public with reliable, accurate, and relevant information. As an organization, however, we don’t have the resources, and therefore the experience, to do very much research of our own. Instead, we collaborate with established researchers in attracting funding and carrying out research projects relevant to our mission and needs.

In 2007 we established a staff position of Research Coordinator, filled on a rotating basis to share the learning and experience among staff. We became the Community Partner for a new Chair of Youth Health at UBC, held by Dr. Jean Shoveler, and began consultations on the agenda that the Chair will address in the coming years. We also partnered with Dr. Judith Soon and with Shira Goldenberg on research projects concerned with the risk behaviours of youth in rural settings and their patterns of access to sexual health services.

Current affiliated research projects

Public Health Chair in Improving Youth Sexual Health

A research and training program focused on policy and program intervention research related to the health and social impacts of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies amongst youth.

Perspectives on Contraception Among Youth: Exploring the Impact of Socio-Cultural and Structural Forces in Fort St. James, BC

This proposed one-year exploratory qualitative study will evaluate the social, cultural, and structural factors affecting youth’s access to, and use of, contraception in northern British Columbia.

Chlamydia Screening in Whistler

Developing and evaluating a pilot program of outreach screening for Chlamydia infection in Whistler, a community with high numbers of reported cases.

Developing an STI Awareness Model for Youth in Northeastern BC

This internship will focus on developing a locally tailored STI awareness model that engages young people, health care providers, and the oil/gas industry to promote STI testing and prevention in Northeastern BC.



The 2007 Annual General Meeting

OPT's 2007 Annual General Meeting took place on September 28 and 29 in Richmond.

Patricia Chisholm received the Dorothy Shaw Award for volunteer leadership. Patricia is a member of the East Kootenay Branch Board who has provided exceptional leadership and energy to the Branch's development into a regional concern, and into a shared facility with other complementary service organizations. She also brought to the table her valuable connections to other community concerns, particularly young parent programs.

Dr. Rosemary Kelsall of Revelstoke received the Jeffrey Dolph Memorial Award, given to a physician working with OPT who demonstrates outstanding dedication and compassion to our clients.

Volunteer of the Year Awards were presented to Justin Orser and Laura Flynn. Justin, one of OPT's youngest members, was recognized for his dedicated service in the Castlegar clinic and Laura for her tireless support of the Squamish clinic.



Joy Becker, OPT's Regional Education Consultant, receives her award from Greg Smith and Margaret McKelvie at OPT's Annual General Meeting 2007.

Joy Becker received the Executive Director's Award of Excellence for her outstanding contribution to the improvement and growth of OPT's field education program and her role in the development and delivery of the certification program for sexual health educators. The OPT Education award was presented to Linda Manzon from Grand Forks. Among other things, Linda's work in sexual health education has created a very receptive and supportive community environment.

In 2007, the OPT Board of Directors introduced a new award for the Branch Board of the Year. This award recognizes Branch Boards for exceptional effort in serving their communities and advancing the mission and vision of the organization. The Boards of the West Kootenay Regional Branch (Castlegar, Kaslo, and Trail) and the Revelstoke Branch were the first recipients of this award. The recognition is complemented with a budget supplement that can be used on any project of interest to the Branch.

At the business meeting, members elected new Directors and completed other standard business of the occasion.



The Voices of Clients and Members

The most lively feedback OPT received during the year was from OPT members, clients, and the general public about the anti-choice advertising campaign launched by “Options BC”, a front for an organization called Pro-Life BC. The misleading and inaccurate information provoked their concern, as did the attempt to confuse the public with respect to the source of the advertisements by using a name similar to OPT. There was an up-side to the issue: as

a result of the advertisements there was a distinct increase in donations in support of the work we are doing.



Logos for the Family Planning Association, OPT's precursor, from the late '60s and early '70s.

In preparation for OPT's fiftieth anniversary in 2011, Colleen McConnell, a member of the Provincial Office staff and OPT's unofficial archivist, began interviewing long-standing members of the organization about their recollections and experience. Colleen also sifted through files going back to the early 1960s to gather and preserve a variety of historical material.

Sometimes a single voice carries the message that we are succeeding in the ways most important to us. Here is what one client said about her experience with OPT:

“ *I received an incredible amount of care and follow-up with the doctors and nurses. My experience at regular walk-in clinics is doctors who do not have the time to sit and listen and who push pharmaceuticals. At the OPT clinic, the doctor and nurse sat with me and patiently answered all my questions. I never once felt rushed. They showed an incredible amount of care and followed up with me within a week's time and even faxed me information that I needed. I felt like I was experiencing luxury medical service. It definitely showed me that you can have positive sexual health care experiences.* ”



Program and Project Funding

OPT received generous financial donations from many individuals, employee groups, businesses, and other community service organizations. Some donors specify their contributions as provincial support, but generally donors' gifts are credited directly to the Branch in the community in which they live.



Ryan Chard, OPT volunteer, engages visitors to the OPT booth at a community relations event in Ladner.

used to subsidize the delivery of OPT's education programs for school students, parents, youth and adults in care and custody, and others.

OPT also acknowledges the core and program support we received from the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the United Way of the Fraser Valley, the Campbell River and District United Way, the Nanaimo and District United Way, the Castlegar District United Way, the Comox Valley United Way, the United Way of Cranbrook, the United Way of the North Okanagan Columbia Shuswap, and the Nelson and District United Way.

Ministry of Health funding for the Sex Sense Line continued through 2007–08, at the same level as the previous year; the funding was sufficient to cover the whole cost of operating and promoting the Line. The Ministry also agreed to a change in the profile of staff who work on the Line, to include sexual health educators, physicians, and other professionals proficient in sexual health. Working on the Sex Sense Line is a valuable practical and learning experience that can now be shared with a wider group of service providers.

OPT also continued to receive program funding from the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), also unchanged. PHSA support accounted for 19% of OPT's total budget. The Fraser Health Authority contributed \$4000 to the cost of the Iron Horse Youth Clinic.

OPT was again generously funded from the Direct Charitable Access program of the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch of the Ministry for Public Safety. Most of OPT's gaming funding was



Financial Activity

Options for Sexual Health ended the fiscal year with a surplus of \$17,605, on a total expenditure budget of \$2,869,688. The surplus is attributable to the capitalization of expenditures on OPT's much-improved web site, which offset a modest cash deficit. Thanks to the donors who assisted and supported OPT through the year, and particularly those who responded to our special request for support early in 2008, we were able to maintain all the services to which we were committed across the province, in spite of other significant pressures during the year.

OPT got some extra good news with the gaming funding we received for the year. We were approved for a three-year period, instead of the previous annual approval process. This allows us to plan the use of gaming funding more strategically, and to improve the effectiveness of how these funds are used on our programs and services.

Expenditures don't always have to be large to have a large impact.

For about \$400, OPT bought a button maker. Using the images from the *WontGetWeird* program and our familiar program icons, OPT staff made buttons for our presence at a number of health fairs and other community events. They proved to be immensely popular and a great way to attract attention to our work. The buttons can be easily customized to carry any message to complement other activities.

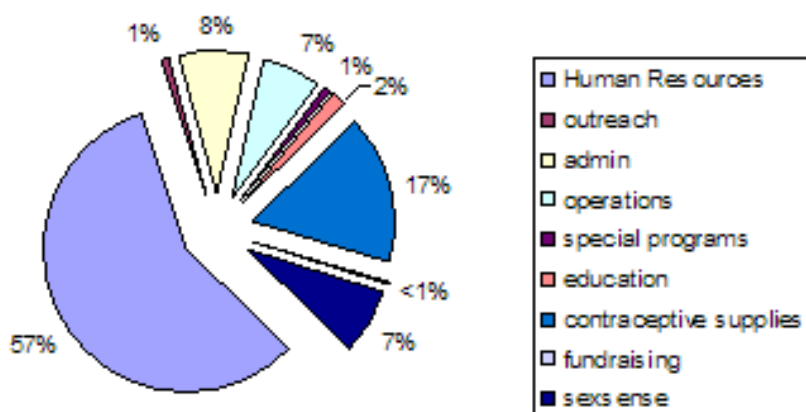
For under a thousand dollars, OPT arranged for our icons to be on genuine postage stamps, along with our name and web site address. The colourful stamps have been used for correspondence within Canada and internationally.

Approximately \$120 of staff wages resulted in a series of educational interviews with web-based Total Teen TV that continue to reach an enormous youth audience, and have made OPT's Kristen Gilbert a bit of a star. The investment also gave OPT valuable educational video material for our own web site and an effective resource for demonstrating our approach to sexual health education to parent groups, schools, and other prospective clients.

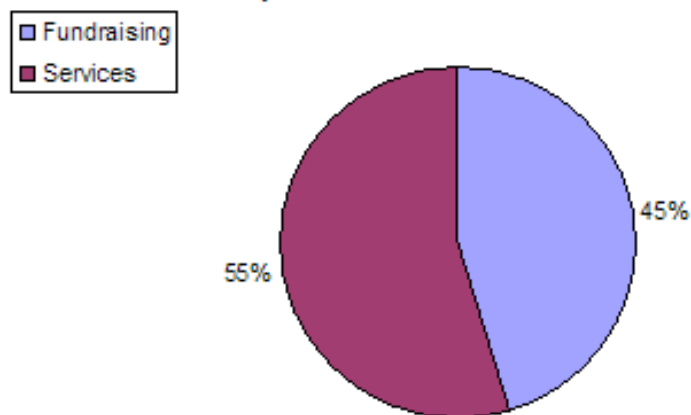


Financial Activity

EXPENSES
Options for Sexual Health
April 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008

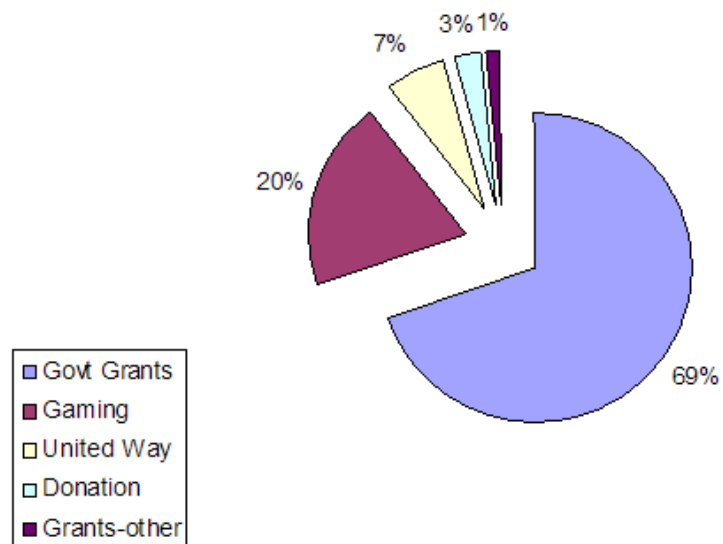


REVENUE SOURCES
Options for Sexual Health
April 1, 2007 - March 31, 2008

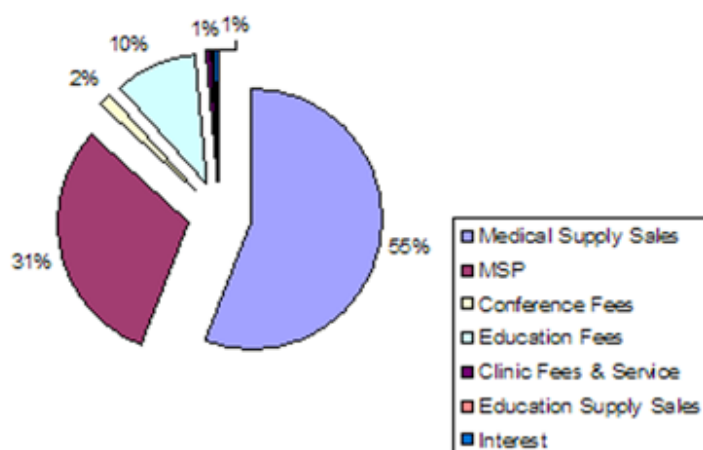


BREAKDOWN OF REVENUE TYPES

Fundraising



Services



This annual report can be found at
www.optionsforsexualhealth.org/about-opt/annual-reports

Be sure to visit our websites:
www.optionsforsexualhealth.org
bc.wontgetweird.com

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