

Spring 2014

Inside BRUCE HOUSE

More Than a House

www.brucehouse.org



25 Years of Hope, Housing, and Compassionate Care



This issue of Inside Bruce House is partially sponsored through the support of
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Averyl Trubiano

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The Snowy Owl AIDS Foundation

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A Message from our Executive Director

As Bruce House is marking its 25th year of providing supportive housing and compassionate care in our community, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on my personal journey with this remarkable organization. I first became aware of Bruce House in 1996 while attending a provincial conference for Ontario AIDS Service Organizations. As a board member of AIDS Niagara at that time and living in the Niagara Peninsula, I could not help but be impressed with this little agency that hailed from Ottawa.

At that time, after a decade of witnessing far too many deaths among my colleagues and friends, I myself was immersed in the care of my partner of 15 years who succumbed to the ravishes of HIV/AIDS in September 1996—too late for the new Protease Inhibitor class of drugs to help prolong his life and slow disease progression. This ongoing trauma called AIDS taught me many valuable lessons one of which was the realization that not everyone was fortunate to have the love and care of family and friends. And not everyone was fortunate to have a caring environment called home.

Quoting from our 20th year publication of a Place of Peace, The Story of Bruce House 1988-2008, “I knew all too well that safe, affordable housing was absolutely essential for people with this disease to achieve some measure of health and quality of life or – if not that – at least to live their last days in comfort and a caring environment.”

That began my love affair with Bruce House whose pioneers knew as early as the mid eighties, the importance of supportive housing and that people needed to live with dignity, even in the face of a terrible disease. In fact, our organization’s mission statement “... providing housing, compassionate care and support in Ottawa for people living with HIV and AIDS, based on the belief that everyone has the right to live and die with dignity” has always reflected our original goal.

What attracted me most was the organization’s focus on life—not death—although at that time many people who came to Bruce House came to us to spend their final days surrounded by love and care. Regardless of the circumstances that forced Bruce House to operate more like a hos-



... pice than anything else, the importance of housing as a health determinant was not lost to those daring pioneers. And twenty five years later, housing as a health determinant remains the heart and soul of who we are.

The advent of new medications had great ramifications not only for individuals living with HIV but for organisations like Bruce House that for over a decade were witnessing people dying of this disease and were now witnessing a new era where people

Through the efforts of staff and volunteers and your incredible support, Bruce House grew to become more than a house.

were living longer. Many did not know what to do with these shifting realities. Even for people diagnosed with HIV this new reality meant moving from a regimen of surviving HIV to one of living with HIV. But what did that (living with HIV) really mean?

cont'd on page 3

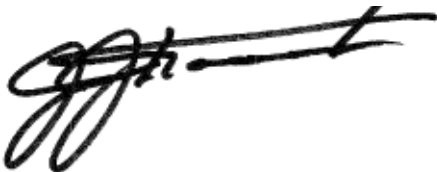
Ed's Message, cont'd from page 2

For Bruce House, this shift was met with the same passion and ferocity that the organisation was renowned for. Adapting to deal with the complex and changing needs of those living with HIV/AIDS was not as difficult for an organisation that was always focussed on helping people live. Much of the credit for this was due to the foresight of our founders and most certainly to the experience and dedicated efforts of our staff and volunteers who over time witnessed these many changes as they evolved, adapting wherever needed, and instinctively responding appropriately to the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS. The biggest challenge was that as more and more people were actually living with HIV, the need for the basic necessities of life grew exponentially as did the demand for more additional housing and other resources.

This was and still is not a unique challenge for Bruce House, an organization that has for struggled for years to find secure funding while offering the best possible options to help people live healthy and quality lives. But this too highlights one of our strengths and that comes in the shape of community—people like you who over the past twenty-five years have been the mainstay of our little agency that could. It was and continues to be your generosity and caring that allows the doors to remain open for the homes we have created for those in need.

In this newsletter there are messages from clients, community partners and even elected government officials describing the impact Bruce House has had on the lives of so many people over the past 25 years. Through the efforts of staff and volunteers and your incredible support, Bruce House grew to become more than a house. You have been a mainstay in our 25 year journey. I am humbled and honoured to have shared part of that journey with you.

Respectfully yours,
J.J. (Jay) Koornstra



Accolades

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the 25th anniversary of Bruce House... The management, staff, and volunteers, past and present, should look upon their work in this organisation with pride.

*KATHLEEN WYNN,
PREMIER OF ONTARIO
FROM A CERTIFICATE PRESENTED BY YASIR NAQVI ON
NOV. 30 2013*

Bruce House provides a crucial service to our community... Having such a kind and caring community-based organization right here in Ottawa Centre is truly an asset, and it is a perfect example of the compassion residents of our neighbourhood show for one another.

*YASIR NAQVI,
ONTARIO MINISTER OF LABOUR
AND MPP FOR OTTAWA CENTRE
FROM A CERTIFICATE PRESENTED ON NOV. 30 2013*

Bruce House has helped to better the lives of patients with HIV and AIDS in Ottawa and, in doing so, has created a more inclusive community that benefits us all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the staff and volunteers at Bruce House and thank them for all their hard work.

*MEMBER'S STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO READ ON NOV. 25 2013 BY
JOHN FRASER,
MPP FOR OTTAWA SOUTH*

On behalf of Members of Ottawa City Council, it is my distinct pleasure to extend congratulations to the Board of Directors, management team, staff, volunteers, and friends of Bruce House in recognition of the celebration of its 25th Anniversary serving the community...

Thanks to Bruce House's benevolent efforts, numerous persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS can live in dignity and receive the necessary supports to improve their quality of life.

*JIM WATSON,
MAYOR OF OTTAWA
FROM A CERTIFICATE PRESENTED ON FEB. 22 2014*



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A Taste for Life 2014

Hope made Delicious

This winter has challenged even the hardest amongst us. The polar vortex has delivered body numbing cold and a new past time - shovelling. Imagine living through this winter with compromised health, inaccessibility, unstable housing or no shelter at all. By going out to dinner on Wednesday, April 23rd you will be a part in helping Bruce House and The Snowy Owl AIDS Foundation ensure our clients receive the best care through our outreach and support.

On Wednesday, April 23rd over 45 Ottawa restaurants will donate 25% of their evening's proceeds to A Taste for Life. Through the generosity of the Taste restaurants and the over 4000 people who dined out in 2013 we raised close to \$90,000. This remarkable achievement defines Ottawa as a caring and generous city, and we are so grateful for your support.

Food is symbolic of love when words are inadequate. – Alan D. Wolfelt

For the fifth year TD is the presenting sponsor of A Taste for Life. Not only does their generosity ensure that all the funds raised go directly to **supporting people living with HIV/AIDS in Ottawa**, they also contribute 75 volunteers who help make the evening a seamless one. •

Join us on Wednesday, April 23rd and be a part of something great in your community. Find your restaurant at

www.atasteforallife.org and reserve a night to remember. Hope made Delicious with A Taste for Life. •

The graphic is a circular plate with a dark, patterned background. The text on the plate includes: "Hope made Delicious" at the top, "Wednesday April 23" in the center, "A TASTE FOR LIFE" on the right, and "Le délice de l'espoir" at the bottom. A TD logo is on the left, and a ribbon logo is in the center. Below the plate, there are logos for Bruce House and The Snowy Owl AIDS Foundation, a QR code, and the website www.aTasteForLife.org.

Special Recognition to Yvonne Gill

Celebrating a milestone – 20 years of volunteering with Bruce House

For 20 years her radiant smile, sense of humor and energetic personality has filled the rooms of many Bruce House fundraisers and events including community fairs, kiosks in malls, bingo nights, Capital Pride, third party events in restaurants and bars to name a few. She has been a Taste for Life host for the annual fundraiser now in its 16th year, and has attended a Taste for Life launch amongst celebrities including Justin Trudeau.

Yvonne, a dedicated volunteer with Bruce House, is non-judgmental, caring and compassionate. Recently Yvonne has taken the lead in helping fundraise at home for Bruce House—if you need a bra, Yvonne knows the best bra for you at the best price—\$5!

Thank you Yvonne for all of your hard work over the past 20 years and celebrate your commitment and gift to Bruce House. •



From Our Community

Sharp

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BRUCE HOUSE! In the eight years I have worked with Oahas I have been struck by the caring approach of Bruce House in serving our people. Bruce House has been and continues to be a vital support for PHAs and the workers that serve them in the Ottawa area. There has NEVER been a time when I have called Richard or anyone at Bruce House to assist one of my clients that I did not get a quick response. In fact, it has been my experience that the staff at Bruce House has gone above and beyond to help me and my people — even at the last minute when it seemed there were no options. I am pleased to congratulate Bruce House on its 25th Anniversary — thank you for supporting our community in the wonderful way you do! We always know we can count on you!

*T. Sharp Dopler
Regional Outreach/Support Service
Worker, Oahas - Ottawa*

“Bruce House has been and continues to be a vital support for PHAs and the workers that serve them in the Ottawa area.”



Cory

It was in 2005 when I first stepped into Bruce House as a placement student and also as a newcomer to Canada. Bruce House has changed a lot since then: the house has doubled its size, the main office has moved, and the residents have come and gone. What has not changed is that it remains a safe haven to anchor people through their ups and downs in life. What has not changed is the determination of staff and volunteers to make Bruce House a home to everyone who needs it. I am proud to be part of Bruce House's past, present and the future.

*Cory Wong
Former placement student,
Bruce House Manager of Support
Services, AIDS Committee of Ottawa*

Karen

Borden Ladner Gervais (BLG) has been part of the Bruce House family for over 10 years. It began with volunteering on the United Way Community Action Day, formerly the Day of Caring, and evolved in to the wonderful year-round partnership we have today.



To all the BLG volunteers the Bruce House slogan “more than a house” says it all. It is a community and we are very lucky to be part of it. It is not only an opportunity for volunteers to contribute in their community but also to learn and educate others about everything Bruce House does and stands for.

The annual Fall Clean-up is a popular event at BLG and for the Bruce House staff and residents. It is a day of hard work, a lot of fun, and catching up with our fearless leaders Richard and Linda who make it even more special.

BLG runs a warm clothing drive for Bruce House over the winter which started after having a conversation with Richard about the needs of the residents and clients. It is now in its third year and gives BLG'ers another way to show Bruce House we are committed to them and their program.

Bruce House is one of the top charities that BLG as a company supports and will continue to support in the future. •

*Karen E. Thompson
Co-ordinator of the BLG Community
Action Day at Bruce House,
Borden Ladner Gervais LLP*

“To all the BLG volunteers the Bruce House slogan ‘more than a house’ says it all. It is a community and we are very lucky to be part of it.”

Do want to support an organization that improves the lives of people with HIV in Ottawa?
Do you want to:

- Receive information and invitations to events?
- Be part of the decision-making process?
- Help guide the organization in future plans?
- Help us help others?

If you answered “yes!” to the above, please consider becoming a Bruce House member. Please call us at 613-729-0911 or email admin@brucehouse.org

Newfoundland Kitchen Party

It was a busy kitchen on February 22nd as Bruce House held their first annual Kitchen Party... Newfoundland style!

Over 120 people packed the Glebe Community Centre, casting away the February blues in favour of live music by the amazing DW James Band and DJ Ashley Gauthier. The aroma of delicious cod cakes, gourmet sausages, spicy salsa and nut burgers filled the room as guests visited the twelve kitchens to tempt their taste buds and take the edge off of a very long, cold winter. Thanks to Steph the Grilling Gourmet, Sarah J's Cupcakes, Nuts & Noix, Signature Foods, Slipacoff Premium Meats and Denis Gourmet sausages for helping to make the evening so delicious.

Food kitchens were complemented by beer, wine and spirits. White Water Brewery travelled from Foresters Falls while HogsBack Brewery provided tastes of their Oatmeal Bacon Stout and donated all the beer for the bar. Sortilège, the fine maple whiskey donated by Mondia Alliance, was a kitchen favourite. In addition we served up Beaus, Steam Whistle, Broadhead and Daniel Lenko wine. Thanks to Mastermind

Events, our kitchen décor vision was created with lace, plaid and homey warmth.

The most eventful part of the evening was led by Kurt Stoodley. Decked out in hip-waders and sou'wester, he invited guests to pucker up and kiss the cod for a traditional Newfoundland screech-in. Donated by Woodman Wines & Spirits Inc., the Newfoundland Screech tasted way better than the cod!

Our first Kitchen Party was a wonderful time! Thank you to auction donors, guests, volunteers and kitchen sponsors. See you next year!

"Deed I is, me old cock, and long may your big jib draw!" •



Pucker up for Bruce House!

It was an outstanding event! Great venue, outstanding food and drink, terrific tunes and an all around fantastic evening! Kudos to everyone!

- Caroline Savignac

I had the pleasure of attending your event on Saturday, during which I got screeched-in! The food and drinks were delicious, and the DW James band was absolutely amazing!!! Thanks to all the organizers... what a great cause!

- Marie-Josée Dubois



Bruce House executive director Jay Koornstra puckers up! (Photo: Nizzi)



Bruce House board member Steve Knight with partner Michael Gagnon have kissed the cod! (Photo: Nizzi)



Our host Kurt Stoodley (Photo: Caroline Phillips, courtesy of The Ottawa Citizen)



Sarah J's Cupcakes, yum! (Photo: Nizzi)



Dancing the night away with DW James band. (Photo: Nizzi)



Steph the Grilling Gourmet's enticing kitchen. (Photo: Nizzi)

The Capital Chordettes, along with guests The Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus, hosted "An evening of song and celebration" for Bruce House on Nov. 30—a warm and intimate evening in recognition of the organisation's 25th anniversary.



Bold Days Fuelled by Rage and Care

The AIDS movement and Bruce House

DAVID HOE

My back and many others were defiantly turned on then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney at the 1989 international AIDS conference in Montreal. Mr. Mulroney was set to open the conference, but Canada's AIDS Action Now! and, ACT UP, principally from the USA, Paris and Germany, had previously overtaken the stage and declared the conference open, thus depriving Mr. Mulroney of his postured leadership. The world was given the truth: "Silence = Death".

They were bold days fuelled by rage and care. How was it possible that a killing virus was not a national emergency? Most of us now know and we are still pulling out the deep centuries-old roots of a plant called stigma: a species that terrified people and world leaders.

It was good in a way that HIV entered a universal revolution still going on as we witness the Sochi Olympics and in the government-sanctioned ongoing killings of gay men in Uganda and Nigeria. Good because gay men, women, people fighting colonialism and racial oppression and those with addictions already were bursting out of chains.

HIV broke the camel's back. It really, really, hurt to be dying and to be ignored and that pain had to have its scream.

So began The AIDS movement across the planet. Community organizing took over the jobs that governments would not do, could not do and, for those who usually care for us, were often frightened to do.

"Bruce House was born through sheer determination of volunteers who scrounged furniture, money and paint, and generated love."

It was politically easier for gay men to talk about HIV and sex, easier for safety to be created by Canadians of African and

Caribbean descent, easier for Aboriginals to develop the analysis of HIV on the back of their emergence into rightful ownership of their self determination and later, more caring for those with addictions to show the way. Well over 100 organizations grew in Canada to prevent HIV infections and care for those of us with HIV.

I first heard about Bruce House when I was The AIDS Committee of Ottawa's (ACO) first Executive Director. Board member Sally Easton said we have to address housing. She put a motion forward asking ACO's Board to take up the offer of a house from Janet Bruce. We were more focused on getting hospitals to expand palliative care for the ever-increasing number of people dying horrible deaths. ACO's board could not see taking on housing.

But shortly after, Bruce House was born through sheer determination of volunteers who scrounged furniture, money and paint, and generated love.

We didn't think HIV would last long. Canada's lead government person on AIDS told us in 1989 that a vaccine was 10 years away and anyway, epidemics gradually go away.

We only took on a short-term crisis and believed that communities would continue to cherish the fight against HIV, and so we did. But then it became less dramatically visible and that changed things.

In 1996 new drugs stopped the slaughter of the immune system that HIV had held for so long. Wherever these drugs became easily available and could be tolerated, the foot slammed down on the brake. The conveyor belt to death had a wrench in the works.

Whew! But catching our breath, two things became clear. HIV was still jumping from one to another and while many infections had been stopped through awareness, it was still moving among us. The second was because we were not dying, more and more people would be living with HIV and we did not know what that meant. Now we do.



AIDS advocate and community leader David Hoe

Keeping people alive and well meant dealing with real lives, ones that could be long—and, dare we dream, could they also be fulfilling lives? Before, when we died, many of our problems and realities died with us. Not so any more!

We often say about our lives that we need something. Most often those are things that we would really like, but not need. Housing is a need, along with safety, food and water, and love. Research shows, and it makes sense to most, that with a

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Bold Days, cont'd from page 8

safe home we can begin to make more choices.

For the past 25 years, Bruce House has provided the bed, roof, address, food, community and home security. The community's decision to take on

“So began The AIDS movement across the planet. Community organizing took over the jobs that governments would not do, could not do and, for those who usually care for us, were often frightened to do.”

HIV over 30 years ago has meant doing a lot with very little and learning all the time – non-stop. But what we still do not know is how to prevent HIV completely. Of course science keeps trying to kill it, stop it or disable its lethal abilities.

I do not think we will see HIV disappearing quickly. Decreasing HIV transmission is still a challenge. Many living with HIV are now facing new issues such as heart problems cognitive functions, liver problems and cancers. Predictions now are that we will likely live a long life. What is not known is what that life might be like.

HIV work is now vast. It crosses social challenges, decades of infections, more complex health issues and multiple generations. Importantly we still must replace stigma with a sense of possibility for all who live the experience and powerfully signal dignity for all.

Community organizations like Bruce House must continue to learn, re-invent ways to educate and care and to do so with what we thought would be a short term job, but have learned is not. But, we keep the promise made 30 years ago of “we’ll be there” •

From Our Clients

A grateful client

I was living in Montreal. The winters were very harsh. I decided to move to the Nation's Capital. I saw on the internet that Bruce House offered housing. I didn't know that Bruce House had a waiting list. I moved to Ottawa and stored most of my belongings at the Bruce House office and I moved into a shelter. I had never in my life been in the shelter system. I have always worked and had my own home.

I was offered a space at the Bruce House transition house. The house was a great experience for me. The idea of taking people that are sick and in despair and offering support and respect was good.

“I feel safe and secure because of the services they offer.”

In September 2006 I was offered a one-bedroom apartment with Bruce House. Bruce House helped me secure the items I needed for my new home. I had a quiet place that I liked. Having shelter is the most important thing to me.

I feel safe and secure because of the services they offer. If I'm sick someone will look after me. If I need a ride to see a doctor I know someone will drive me.

Bruce House offers more support than just a place to live.

Anonymous

Brigitte

My name is Brigitte Charbonneau. I am a 68 year old mother of two children and a grandmother to eighteen grand kids.

I moved into a Bruce House apartment in '98 and I have never been happier.

Living in this community has helped me greatly in many ways. We have a great support system. I belong to the Buddy Program where we help each other with shopping or just companionship while some family members can have some time off.

Bruce House has an amazing home away from home, a house with great dedicated staff and volunteers. We also have a Community Kitchen program. Once a month several of us meet, cook and share the meals with each other. This way each

of us have 4-6 extra meals till the end of the month.

I am extremely privileged to live here and grateful to Bruce House for making this possible for so many of us.

Brigitte Charbonneau



Brad

I thank goodness for the assistance I have and continue to get from Bruce House. The staff went out of their normal circle to help me while in hospital recently. Bruce House has also made me feel more a part of society, helping with abuse, and housing and much more. I feel more like a part of society and am mentally/physically better now.

Thanks a whole bunch, to all the staff and volunteers at Bruce House. •

Brad Renaud

“I thank goodness for the assistance I have and continue to get from Bruce House.”



From Our Staff

Sam

I started at Bruce House in the fall of 2005 as a volunteer, and later became a caregiver in May 2006 first on a casual basis and I am now a full-time employee.

HIV has changed over years. Research has provided better medication for treatment and changed the dynamics. We now treat people from all walks of life with secondary illnesses due to their HIV status, addictions, mental illness or homelessness.

Our jobs can be challenging but so gratifying as we assist our clients as they take steps to recovery and finally their big step out of our door to healthy, independent living.

“It is not just a job but becomes part of who we are.”

My colleagues are like family members. We are a close bunch with me being often referred to as the “newbie” as the entire full time staff have been there 15-20 years. It is not just a job but becomes part of who we are.

SAM TAYLOR

CAREGIVER, BRUCE HOUSE TRANSITION HOUSE

Doug

During my more than 20 years of working at Bruce House I have seen a lot of things. Here are just a few.

I have had the pleasure and privilege of being at the birth of our client’s daughter. I was holding that precious baby three hours after she was born. Today that baby is an 18 year-old woman living a fantastic life.

I have witnessed the incredible personal growth of a young woman from Rwanda. She came to Canada after watching her entire family be murdered. She arrived here alone and HIV-positive. Bruce House housed her in an apartment and offered her support. She attended university and graduated with honours. She left Bruce House after securing an amazing job. The last time she visited with me she

“The best part of my job is giving a person or a family a set of keys to their new home.”

told me that she had bought a house. How great is that!?

The best part of my job is giving a person or a family a set of keys to their new home. Often there are tears of joy. For some this is their first home. •

DOUG COOPER

TEAM LEADER, BRUCE HOUSE SUPPORTIVE INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM

Housing First

The CCOC-Bruce House partnership

DEBBIE BARTON

MANAGER, RENTAL DEPARTMENT – CENTRETOWN CITIZENS OTTAWA CORPORATION

Twenty five years ago, Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) spent money it didn’t have to buy a house in downtown Ottawa to provide affordable housing and supports for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Along with the committed volunteers of the AIDS Housing Group of Ottawa, including Dan O’Leary (who was also a CCOC Board member) we purchased the house for \$166,000 without yet having approval from the government. That approval (and the funds) came almost a year later!

Why did we do it and why do we do it still?

Because... it was the right thing to do and out of this came a beautiful and successful partnership between the two organizations. We both know our strengths (CCOC is a landlord, Bruce House is a support agency) and we have respect for each other’s mandate.

Richard Naster, hired originally as the residence supervisor in 1991, worked closely with us at the beginning, even training our maintenance staff and doing much to calm their fears. He later brought on Doug Cooper who continues to be our “go to” person, always going the extra mile for us and the Bruce House tenants he supports.

After the first house had been operating for some time, a new resident

brought an issue which could not be ignored: HIV/AIDS not only affected single gay men, but also young mothers escaping community disapproval. This young woman came all the way from Nunavut with her baby and it was clear that a shared housing facility was not appropriate. This led CCOC to work with Bruce House on a new way to provide Housing First, through our apartment program.

It’s been an interesting 25 year “ride”, with all of the ups and downs of treatment options and the shift in demographics of affected tenants. Throughout this, CCOC and Bruce House have worked harmoniously to achieve the best outcomes for everyone.

Congratulation to our partner for 25 years of great work!

For more information on CCOC please visit cchohousing.org •

“Congratulation to our partner for 25 years of great work!”



Beaver Barracks, the latest CCOC apartment building. Photo courtesy CCOC

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I would like to donate \$_____ each month using my credit card. (We will contact you to confirm details.)

I would like to be added to Bruce House's mailing list (approx. 4 items per year).

Please email my tax receipt.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or above.

Credit Card Donations	Name on card _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Visa	<input type="checkbox"/> Mastercard	<input type="checkbox"/> Amex
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Bruce House marks 25th Annual General Meeting

On Sept. 30 2013 Bruce House members, staff, volunteers and guests gathered for the organization's 25th Annual General Meeting to review the business of the past year, receive audited financial statements, and elect a board of directors.

Chairperson Mark Giberson reported on the activities of the board and organization, thanking a "wonderful board of directors who love the organization and the cause." Mark recognised past Chairperson Sandi Bonini as she concluded seven years of service on the board, as well as retiring board members Jennifer Davis, Paul Taylor and Aileen Leo and returning board members Greg Beck, Tony Boghossian, Lynne Cioppa, Carol Rose, Jacquie Bushell, Rosanna Carreon, and Robert Ross.

Mark's report included: an update on the Bruce House Strategic Plan 2010-2015; steps the board took to enhance their effectiveness as a governance board; the recruitment of external expertise by appointing three community members to various committees; recommendations by the Nominating Committee concerning maintaining gender balance on the board and inter-

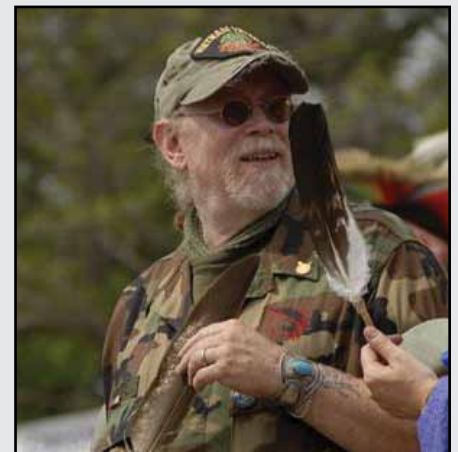
viewing potential board members; and a membership recruitment program developed by the Finance and Fundraising Committee.

Keynote speaker "Grandfather" Willy Bruce, a First Nations elder, introduced himself in his mother's language, a language he learned in whispered conversations in the kitchen, as his mother's experience with residential schools had left her fearful of expressing her heritage. Weaving together his personal experiences and those of his ancestors, he invited the audience to draw connections with their own experiences. Willy highlighted the higher rate of HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal people—the fastest growing HIV/AIDS population in Canada. His belief is that we all have a sacred gift to give to humanity, but giving it requires knowing who we are. In the same spirit, he said that organizations like Bruce House are about "unconditional love". Mark Giberson presented Grandfather Will with a traditional gift of tobacco in thanks for his wisdom.

Executive Director Jay Koornstra reported on the growth in Bruce House services and highlighted the remarkable 37% growth in volunteer hours over the

previous year. He also announced a 12% increase in apartment units available through the Supportive Independent Living Program, and that new programs and services have been instituted to enhance quality of life for Bruce House clients. He noted challenges during the previous year including meeting the rising cost of providing services while gifts and funding decline.

Jay closed his remarks by recognizing the coming 25th anniversary and thanking staff, volunteers and board members for their dedication. He



"Grandfather" Willy Bruce

cont'd on page 12

Supportive housing and compassionate care

BRUCE HOUSE

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AGM cont'd from page 11

pledged that the organization will continue to invest in strategies supported by the evidence that demonstrates the benefit of supportive housing for those with HIV/AIDS.

Board Secretary Greg Beck announced the board's slate of nominees for the board of directors: James Young, Marc Brabant, and Steven Knight. The three were elected by acclamation, as were the returning board members.

A moment of silence followed for those known to Bruce House who had passed away during the year.

The AGM was adjourned with Mark Giberson reminding those present of Willy's words — that we all have something to be thankful for. •

The members of the 2013-14 board of directors are:

Chairperson: Greg Beck

Vice Chair: Carol Rose

Treasurer: Marc Brabant

Secretary: Jacquie Bushell

Past Chair: Mark Giberson

Executive Director: JJ (Jay) Koornstra (ex officio)

Directors: Anton (Tony) Boghossian, Lynne Cioppa, Rosanna, Carreon, Robert Ross, Steven, Knight and James Young

Reflections from board members

I have been an indirect supporter of Bruce House for years—participating in Taste for Life, supporting direct fundraising efforts, and so on. The organization has always stood out as one that, in addition to the important and tangible community support it provides, is well run and is making maximum use of the resources afforded to them.

When the opportunity to join Bruce House as a volunteer presented itself, the decision came easy given our apparent shared values. Even though my time with the organization is in its infancy, it's already clear to me that I've made the right choice. Their community impact is real and evident; the many other volunteers on which the organization so heavily relies are unquestionably committed and sincere; and the employees are top-notch and without equals. Bruce House is a model charitable organization, and one that I am proud and humbled to be part of.

Steven Knight

I have been a member of the Bruce House Board for a little over a year now—it has opened my eyes. I am blessed to have never been affected by a family history of health concerns or social issues, so I have no allegiance to any one group. I am very lucky to choose where I spend my volunteer time without feeling obligated. And I choose Bruce House, they have shown me what housing means to a community. The care, support and compassion the staff and volunteers have for one another and the clientele is simply humbling.

I was invited to join the board of Bruce House by a friend. I stay because I choose to. I stay to continue to learn, I stay on the board so that I continue to grow as a person from our shared experiences.

Jacquie Bushell