

## Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver Backgrounder

The Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver (EFry) is a non-profit, community-based organization providing support to women, girls and children involved in or affected by the justice system.

E Fry's services address the spectrum of inter-related factors in women and youth's involvement in crime. Working to break the cycle of poverty, addiction, mental illness and homelessness, E Fry delivers community and institutional programs which address social, emotional and rehabilitation needs.

Since its establishment in 1939, EFry has been guided by the principles that everyone has personal worth, the right to be treated with dignity, fairness and compassion, and the potential to become a responsible citizen. Working independently as well as with community and government bodies, EFry has been instrumental in creating initiatives that have become the national standard in treatment and rehabilitation.

E Fry's early work focused on transforming conditions for women and girls in custody. It succeeded in establishing female prisoners' rights to single gender detention facilities; winning acceptance for in-prison schooling; founding Vancouver's methadone program and developing community alternatives to prison.

E Fry now provides support across the continuum of justice system involvement – from those at risk to those making the transition back to independent living. It is the only organization of its kind focused on the unique needs of the female gender. Its counseling, housing and skills training programs support both marginalized women and their families in leading better lives. Among these is the first Canadian shelter for women and their children and the first non-governmental group home for youth. Its training initiative, the Bridges Program, has been adopted as a Government of Canada employment strategy. Recently, EFry created Women Working Wonders, a literacy-to-employment program.

Through its new initiative OURS (Opportunity, Understanding, Respect, Success), EFry is currently developing support initiatives for the children of prisoners, a previously unidentified group at high risk of future justice system involvement.

EFry serves over 2200 clients annually. Seventy-seven percent have children, and the majority of these are the sole caregiver. Virtually all live below the poverty line.

Celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, EFry was the first Elizabeth Fry Society in Canada. Today, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies has 24 member associations across the country.