

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Howe Sound Women's Centre Receives \$140,865 Donation From
Clasina van Bemmell To Support Second Stage Housing**

SQUAMISH, BC (October 3, 2014) The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society (the 'Women's Centre') is pleased to announce that Nanaimo resident and entrepreneur Clasina van Bemmell has donated \$140,865 to support long term housing for women and children fleeing abuse. The funding is earmarked as seed funding for the development of Second Stage Housing Units, and was made by Ms. van Bemmell as a voluntary community amenity contribution for the rezoning of the property located at 37881 Cleveland Avenue in Squamish. The District of Squamish approved the reallocation of the funds in lieu of a contribution to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund at the August 26 Council Meeting.

"The generosity of Ms. van Bemmell represents a significant milestone in our efforts to provide long-term, sustainable housing for women and their children fleeing abuse, and will have a lasting impact on the lives of those affected," says Sheila Allen, executive director with Howe Sound Women's Centre Society. "Access to affordable housing is a significant barrier to women leaving abusive relationships. While Pearl's Place Transition House offers critical emergency housing for women, children, and pets for up to 30 days, our community is lacking a longer term solution. Second Stage Housing offers safe, affordable housing at subsidized rental rates, empowering women to focus on rebuilding their lives. We are grateful to Ms. van Bemmell and the District of Squamish for their support of our vision to bring this project to life."

The need for 16 second stage housing units in Squamish was identified by 'Project Melany', a recent study and pilot project focused on the housing needs of women fleeing abuse throughout the Sea to Sky Corridor. These units will provide affordable housing for women and their children beyond the crisis stage, enabling them to live free from violence and abuse for the long term. In addition to housing support, residents will receive access to counselling and one on one support services offered by the Women's Centre.

"It is with great pleasure that I support the Second Stage Housing project of the Howe Sound Women's Centre," says Clasina van Bemmell. "I so hope that the Sea to Sky community will rally behind them to make this capital campaign a success. When the heart is full – you will automatically give."

The funds received from Ms. van Bemmell represent an initial investment in the project, and the Women's Centre is currently in discussions with BC Housing and other partners regarding funding options for the development and operational costs associated with the project.

For those interested in supporting this project, the Women's Centre is seeking professionals in the areas of architectural design, real estate development, project management and capital campaign development to join the Women's Centre Housing Committee. For further information, please contact Sheila Allen, Executive Director, at ed@hswc.ca or 604-892-5748.

About The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society

The Howe Sound Women's Centre Society is a for purpose charitable organization that has been serving the Sea to Sky Community for 32 years. The Women's Centre is focused on supporting women, children and youth who are in need of emergency shelter, support, referrals and advocacy, and in particular, those who are experiencing high conflict, violence or abuse. The Women's Centre offers emergency housing through Pearl's Place Transition House and Pearl's Safe Home, children and youth focused programs such as Children Who Witness Abuse counselling, Working Through Separation and Divorce counselling, and Violence is Preventable education, multicultural outreach, and health and wellness programs for women. The Squamish and Whistler Women's Centres receive over 5,500 visits annually. The Women's Centre also operates Pearl's Value & Vintage, a second hand thrift store selling gently used and vintage goods, with all proceeds from sales supporting Howe Sound Women's Centre Society programs. For more information, visit www.hswc.ca.

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