

2009 Report to the Community

THE BRIDGE

Youth & Family Services





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Message from the President and E.D.

It is with great pleasure that we present this report to the community on the activities of The Bridge Youth & Family Services Society during the past year. Reading through the report you will find that it is centered on the stories of the youth and families who have participated in our programs.

These stories are an example of the many stories we hear each and every day, and are at the heart of the work we do. They serve to inspire and motivate us, and we hope they will resonate with you as they do with us.

Upon reading this report if you wish to participate in making more stories come to life in our community, please contact us. Our goal is to work together with you to ensure that every child, youth and family has a positive story to share.

One way that you can participate is to volunteer in one of our programs such as our parent support groups.

You may also donate to our 'Bridging the Gap' - Counselling and Parent Education Sponsorship Fund. This fund is designed to sponsor individual children, parents and families to access parenting courses and counselling services they would not otherwise be able to afford. The Bridge is a federally registered charitable organization so your donation is tax deductible.

We hope you will enjoy this 2009 Report to the Community and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Whiteley
President

Dennis Dandeneau
Executive Director



Lisa's Story

I KNOW that play group has been a HUGE assist for me in raising my boys the way I want to. Now, there are days, more than I care to admit, that I am less of a parent than I know I can be. And there are moments in every mother's day that expose the true essence of what it means to be a stressed, weary mother, yearning for days without kids! That's just called being human. But I am living proof that groups like Peachland play group, help mothers pull through those moments and those days. I see where my boys are at socially and developmentally through observing them with, and dare I say, comparing them to other kids their age.

Group also benefits me in a way that was unexpected at first; I have learned different parenting techniques by watching other parents! Go figure. It's so obvious now, but I didn't think of play group in that way when I first started going, but soon realized there was a lot more to these sessions than just getting your kids tired for nap time.

After the second time I attended with my son, I started to realize that other mothers had the same challenges I did. It got me out of the house. I went through a phase after my son was born where I didn't think I could go places without my husband to help me with the baby. I think that a lot of first time moms

"I have learned different parenting techniques by watching other parents! Go figure."

have this fear. I started to see how it was okay to have the feelings I was having, and that every other mother there was thinking about the 4 loads of laundry she needed to get to as soon as she got home.

On the whole, this group has done more for me and my family than I actually realized until I reflected on it, and how far I have come since the first day I walked sheepishly into the gym with my then 7 month old first baby. You know, every single one of my friends in Peachland, I have met through Play group. That alone is worth more than I can express.

I could write for a long time and expand on all these aspects, but I want you to know that you are doing a very important job. You have more of an influence than you realize, you have given me confidence as a mother. You are a role model, even in those "exposed mother" moments, and a fantastic leader. Oh ya, and the other great thing I like about group is of course...the muffins!



We offer 14 weekly groups at 11 locations across the Central Okanagan from Oyama to Peachland. This year over 500 families benefitted from the groups.

Special Deliveries and Giggles and Hugs

Parent education and support groups such as Special Deliveries and Giggles and Hugs assist parents in their parenting role through songs and rhymes, interactive play activities, nutrition education, and discussions on various positive parenting themes.

Pre-Natal Wellness Education

The program is offered to expectant women and their partners with the goal of wellness in pregnancy and after the child is born. Activities include fitness, healthy lifestyle and nutrition, body image, stress management and information on community resources.



Dalyce & Amanda's Story*

Just over three years ago we attended our first Giggles and Hugs weekly get together. We were definitely unprepared for motherhood. The Giggles and Hugs Program provided us with the opportunity to acquire the tools necessary for raising our children through infancy. Each week we discussed topics about caring for your child such as breast feeding, solid feeding, interaction and safety. This allowed us to evolve into confident mothers.

While the weekly discussions were beneficial, the social network that Giggles and Hugs allowed us to be a part of was just as important. We met mothers with situations similar or very different to ours; two things we all had in common were feeling a little overwhelmed and only wanting the best for our babies.

Sometimes just knowing you aren't the only one feeling this way is all the support you need. Giggles and Hugs provided us with emotional and practical support and helped us lay an important foundation for our children.

We later graduated from Giggles and Hugs, but, the support did not stop there. With our children, we regularly attend various no-cost programs such as the Family Resource Program, Strong Start and our

“Sometimes just knowing you aren't the only one feeling this way is all the support you need.”



Parent Education Courses

Parent Education Courses are offered throughout the year with the focus on positive parenting knowledge and skills for all parents and caregivers of children 0-19 years of age.

Family Resource Program

The Family Resource Program provides an opportunity for parents to enjoy creative fun with their children, connect with other parents, access a toy lending library and receive information on community resources.

Parent Talk

Parent Talk provides a weekly drop-in forum for parents to discuss and learn about various parenting topics while their children engage in creative fun and play activities.

personal favorite Parent Talk. This particular program offers quality child minding for our children while we spend adult time with other parents.

As stay at home moms, we feel this separation time is vital to our sanity; meanwhile giving our children the opportunity to spend time playing with others without our presence. They are learning to adjust to other caregivers' activities and boundaries as we attend interactive sessions that upgrade our tools for parenting, relationships, and most important, personal growth. Parent Talk and the previously mentioned programs have provided us with supportive information and the resources to build a social network of friends, whom we now spend time with on a day to day basis.

The path to parenthood is hard and everything seems to change overnight, but with these programs we have been able to develop our skills and build a network of support that is irreplaceable. For this we are extremely grateful to all who have made it possible.

** A story by two parents.*

Toni's Story*

While living at my foster home, I began talking with my social worker about independent living. She thought that it was time for me to go on it in order to give me some time before I turned 19 to learn some skills that I would need to know once I was on my own. My social worker referred me to The Bridge where I met my Youth Transitions Counsellor. I entered the program a few months before I turned 18. I graduated from grade 12 and the day after, I moved into my own suite.

In the program, I was taught basic skills like grocery shopping and dealing with finances. My counsellor met with me weekly and helped me to organize myself and helped me keep on track. She helped me with schooling and went to meetings with me (like doctor, dentist and college appointments). She helped me talk with the right people. She was there to help me and support me with the big changes that I was going through. It helped to know that I had someone to call if I was unsure or needed something.

The program is definitely a good thing. I felt that I had support and someone to go to. I feel it gave me a lot of wisdom on how to deal with different life situations and life issues that came up. My Youth Transitions Counsellor felt like a friend. I honestly felt like I could go to her with anything. That year was probably the hardest year of my life.

“ Sometimes you have to change the path - there is always a way around to your goal. ”

It was helpful to have her around. I don't know what the outcome would have been if she hadn't been there to guide me through the stuff that was going on in my life at the time. A lot happened that year.

No matter what happens, how stressful or how financially challenged I am, I know that there is always the brighter side of things - that things always improve. If you stay focused, stay determined and don't let stress get to you - you just have to push forward. I know I have to keep focused on things that I have to do; it's not the end of the world if things don't always happen the way you want them to. Sometimes you have to change the path - there is always a way around to your goal.

I would definitely recommend the program to others. It helped me through all the changes that year. I took all the lessons that I learned that year with me - they are still with me today. Being part of the program made the transition a lot easier on me.

Today, I am in a long term relationship, work two jobs (one of which is my own business) and have completed upgrading courses at the college. I hope to be accepted into a college program this winter, where I will focus on schooling full time.

**Name has been changed.*



The past year saw over 200 children and families receive much needed one-to-one services.

Lawrence Avenue Residence

Lawrence Avenue Residence provides a safe haven for Kelowna youth to live while they are supported to achieve their social, health, and educational goals. Lawrence Avenue Residence is often referred to as “home” and provides a structured care environment where the youth can experience success.

Transition Suites

This unique program provides youth with a supportive and realistic living experience in a self-contained suite located within a mentor's home.

Youth Transitions

Assists young people as they transition to adulthood and supports their development as competent, contributing citizens of our community.




Jen's Story*

My counsellor at the Bridge was instrumental in changing my relationship with my daughter from that of inconsistency and conflict to one that is now balanced and joyful. In approximately fourteen months my counsellor and I worked first on setting several important goals for myself and my child. Then, by providing clear examples and concrete evaluations of my progress, my counsellor guided me through the steps necessary to change less effective parenting skills into skills that work, skills that take into account the needs of my child, as well as my own.

My counsellor's advice was instrumental in helping me change my parenting skills. Through constant repetition and evaluation and by guiding me to become a better parent my counsellor has provided me with an extensive understanding of what good parenting is, and what it takes to maintain a good relationship between myself and my child.

In setting specific goals, I learned how important routine and structure are for a little person. Without rules, structure, consistency and daily routines the child will not feel safe, leading to acting out behaviour, and ultimately an anxious child.



“My counsellor's advice was instrumental in helping me change my parenting skills.”

In implementing these rules, structure and routines in a consistent manner, my child and I now have a positive relationship. There is little conflict; parenting is much easier and infinitely more fulfilling. My child is feeling safer because she knows what to expect each and every day. I spend less time feeling like parenting is a struggle, and spend significantly more time engaged with my daughter in a pleasant way, interacting one-on-one with her whether playing or going through routines.

The Bridge services provided me a chance to “start over”, and to change ineffective parenting into appropriate means of parenting. Our goals accomplished, it is just a matter of remaining focused and continuing to focus on consistency in my parenting. Thank you for providing me with the tools to change.

** Name has been changed.*

Caregiver Support

Foster homes are very important to many children in our community. We assist these caregivers with this vital role.

Youth and Family Counselling

Timely and affordable counselling builds strong, resilient families. We offer counselling services to families who wish to enhance their parenting, communication and relationship skills.

The Path

This program provides support for youth moving from a group home to a family care home setting.

Youth in Care Network

Provides opportunity to youth in care (12 - 24 yrs) to talk about matters that directly affect their everyday lives.

Summer Recreation Project

Provides a positive recreational experience for children and youth through a variety of summer activities.

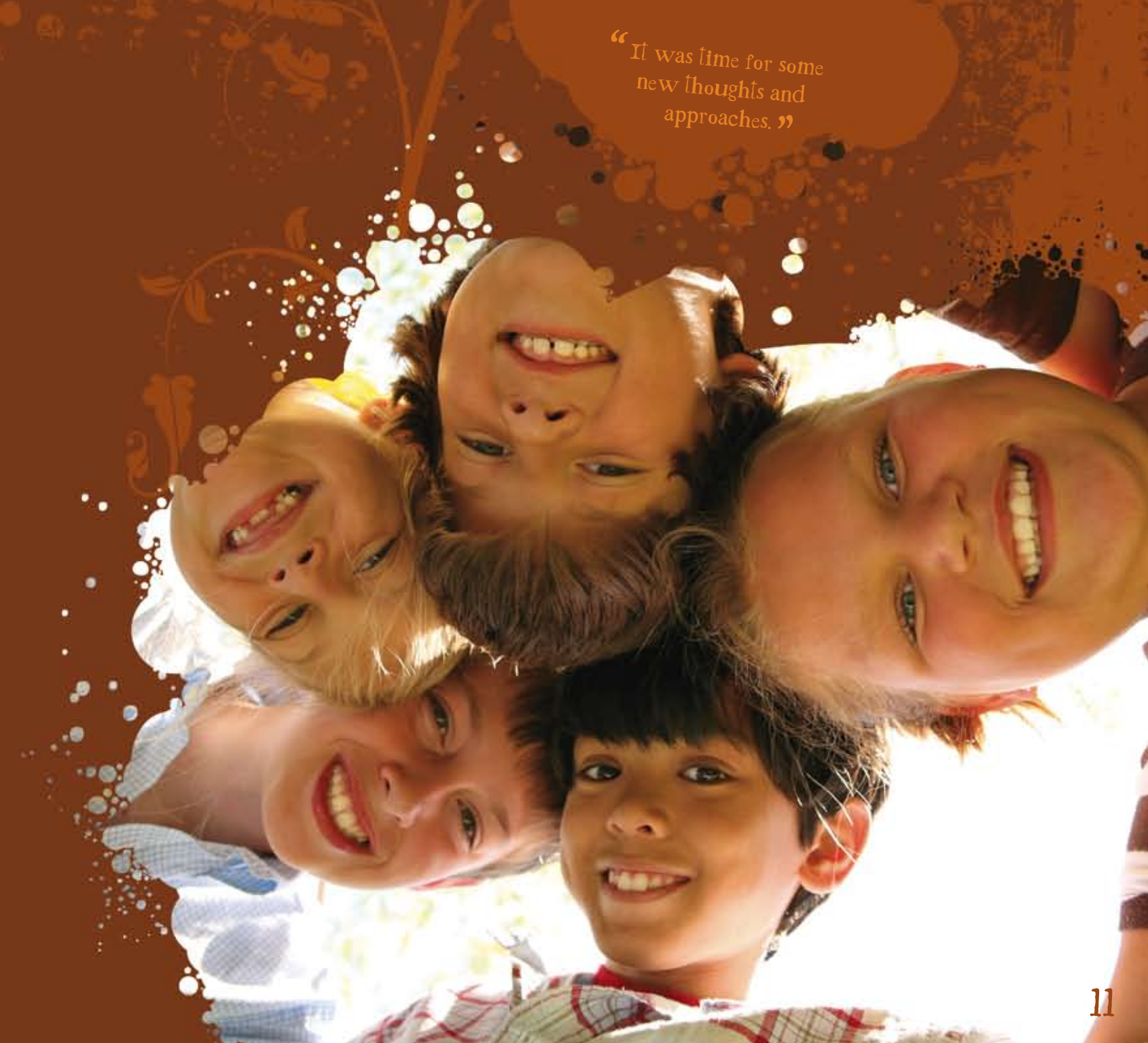


Chris' Story*

Although it took some courage, and a couple of investigative phone calls, I found a place I am grateful exists in Kelowna. At the time, we needed a third ear and some guidance about the issues we were facing. We wanted to improve our communication and our home situation, and recalled we had been involved with a couple of parenting courses (at The Bridge) over the years. It was time for some new thoughts and approaches.

We are glad that we 'took the risk' of making a counselling appointment, and found we soon were over our initial nervousness. Our counsellor is very approachable and kind, making our visits enjoyable 'work' on our life issues. It is as if our counsellor 'speaks our language' and we are grateful to have a safe place to go and discuss our situations, and take away new insights to digest. If one is looking for hope, personal growth direction, or assistance with family situations, I would not hesitate to direct them to The Bridge Youth & Family Services.

** Name has been changed.*



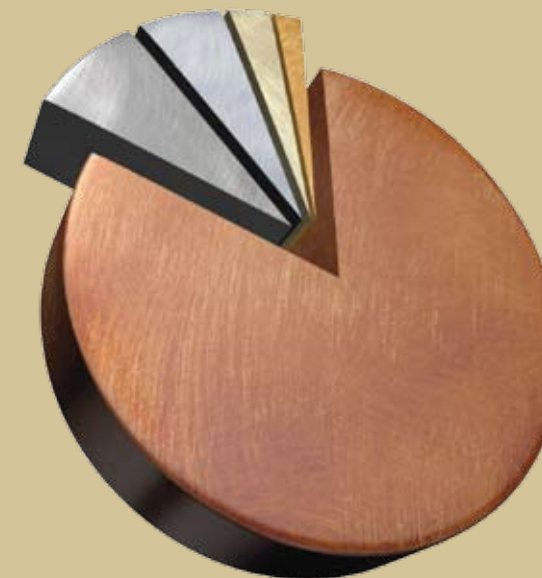
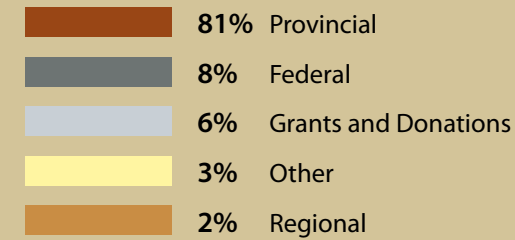
“It was time for some new thoughts and approaches.”

Financial Report

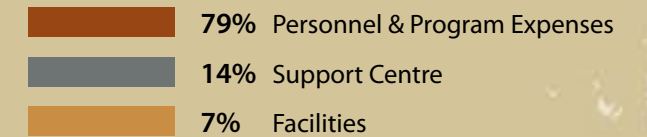
Balance Sheet

March 31,	2009	2008
Assets		
Current		
Cash	\$ 223,222	\$ 179,759
Short-term investment	356,874	347,602
Accounts receivable	28,924	49,117
Accrued interest receivable	3,116	1,707
Prepaid expenses and deposits	31,187	28,009
	643,323	606,194
Property and equipment	575,181	589,546
	\$1,218,504	\$ 1,195,740
Liabilities		
Current		
Accounts payable & accrued liabilities	\$ 207,533	\$ 201,115
Deferred revenue	227,970	198,269
Current portion of long-term debt	20,817	19,512
	456,320	418,896
Long-term debt	202,104	222,952
	658,424	641,848
Net Assets		
Accumulated operating deficit	(42,181)	(43,190)
Internally restricted	250,000	250,000
Invested in property and equipment	352,261	347,892
	560,080	553,892
	\$1,218,504	\$ 1,195,740

2008-09 Revenue \$ 2,356,369



2008-09 Expenditures \$ 2,350,181





Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement goes to our volunteers and staff who daily work to help youth and families, to our funders who support the efforts of the society and to all the community, provincial and national organizations with which we work.

Funding support for the activities of the society is essential to our efforts to enhance the lives of youth and families. The following organizations have contributed substantially to these efforts and on behalf of the youth and families we extend our warmest thanks.

- 2010 Legacies Now
- BC Schizophrenic Society
- BC Tree Fruits
- Central Okanagan Foundation
- Choices Market
- City of Kelowna
- District of West Kelowna
- Human Resources & Skills Development Canada
- Interior Health Authority
- Kelowna General Hospital Foundation
- Kiwanis Club – Summit

- Literacy BC
- Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance
- Private Donations
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- School District No. 23
- Success by Six
- TD Canada Trust, in conjunction with Tree of Hope and Landmark Centre

We appreciate the collaboration and support of many allied community organizations. These organizations also work hard to strengthen the social fabric of our community and we are proud of our association with them.


- BC Association of Farmers Market
- Clubhouse Child Care Centre
- Community Action Toward Children's Health Coalition
- Desert Sun Counselling
- Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks
- Kelowna Child Care Society
- Kelowna Farmers and Crafters Market
- Kelowna Immigrant Society
- Ki-Low-Na Friendship Centre
- Knights of Columbus
- Lower Similkameen Community Services Society
- Okanagan Boys and Girls Clubs
- Okanagan College
- Okanagan Regional Library
- Peachland Community Centre

- Poverty & Homelessness Action Team of the Central Okanagan (PHAT-CO)
- Princeton Child Care Society
- Project Literacy Kelowna Society
- Public Health Nursing, Interior Health
- Ryerson University
- School District No. 23
- University of British Columbia, Okanagan
- Westbank First Nation
- Westbank United Church
- YMCA-YWCA

Service to community is supported by associations and organizations that offer a national and provincial perspective on the issues.

We are proud members of the following organizations and networks:

- BC Association of Family Resource Programs
- BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs
- BC Community Action Program for Children Society
- BC Council for Families
- BC Non Profit Housing Association
- Child Welfare League of Canada
- Family Resource Programs of Canada
- Federation of Community Social Services of BC
- National Network for Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP)
- United Community Services Co-op



Would you like to know more...

The Bridge Youth & Family Services Society invites you to participate in supporting the families of our community. If you are interested, please complete the form on the next page and mail or e-mail to:

The Bridge Youth & Family Services Society
1829 Chandler Street
Kelowna, BC
V1Y 3Z2
Email: info@thebridgeservices.ca

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I would like to receive more information about services offered by The Bridge.

By mail By email

I would like to receive a copy of your newsletter.

By mail By email

I would like to volunteer.

I would like to become a member.
(Annual fee \$5.00)

I would like to support the work of The Bridge with a tax deductible donation in the amount of \$ _____.

You may enclose a cheque to the address on the opposite page or call 250-763-0456 to pay by credit card.

You will find more information on our website at www.thebridgeservices.ca



THE BRIDGE

Youth & Family Services



The Bridge Youth & Family Services Society
1829 Chandler Street Kelowna, BC V1Y 3Z2

www.thebridgeservices.ca Email: info@thebridgeservices.ca
Phone: 250-763-0456 Fax: 250-763-4910