

Reflecting on my first year at Watari—Geoff Boon

It has been just over a year since I began my journey with Watari. I remember browsing through Craigslist adds looking for jobs. Not just any job though, I wanted a career, something I could be passionate about. I wanted to learn, grow, and most importantly look forward to coming to work everyday. I remember reading the job posting and immediately saying to myself “I have to get this job!” It had everything I was looking for in a career working with youth. Most notably, I wanted to show youth that they are not alone in their hard times and that there are people that care.

Excited and rattled with nerves I walked into Day Program and was greeted by my soon to be colleagues; I’ll be honest, it was a very intimidating moment. I had never been involved in an interview process like this before, but it gave me a strong sense of how Watari operated, a real sense of teamwork, and I wanted to be a part of

that. I left feeling incredibly good about how it went, and wanting the position even more.

I got the job! What I didn’t know was how much working at Watari over the next year would change my life. During the year we experienced the tragic death of a program participant. This was my first experience of such a loss and I am grateful that I was with this group of people to work through grief and sadness. We were all so supportive of each other, giving space to shared our memories and cry if needed. It was a reminder of how wounded yet resilient the people we work with can be; youth have an amazing capacity to grow.

One participant in particular comes to mind. This youth showed up to program everyday ready to work no matter how challenging the day, she would put in 100%. I’d like to think that each day at Day Program was another step in

her right direction. After the full 7 weeks was completed she made the staff at Day Program a card that she designed and created herself. Wow, was all I could say. As one of my colleagues put it “she took everything that we talked about and incorporated it into the drawing”. This is just another example of how fulfilling I find my career to be at Watari.

It’s not just our clients that have left an impact with me; my colleagues have taught me so much as well. I have been fortunate enough to work with some amazing people at Watari. I have formed friendships and bonds that I truly value. I can’t imagine doing this job alongside anybody else. Each individual that I work with has impacted me in a different way. A way in which I will never forget.

Spotlight on S.T.A.R.

The STAR Project, an acronym meaning Stop Think Assess Respond. Funded through Vancouver Coastal Health, STAR is facilitated by two substance misuse counselors and provides health promotion education around choice, developing strong community connections and drugs and responsibility to students in grades 5 through 7. The development of the curriculum is based on 12 years of working with Vancouver elementary schools and research of better and emerging practice relating to substance abuse prevention education and public health. The project focuses on critical thinking and decision

learning how to say no if you get pressured into doing something!

Grade 7 Seymour Student on why STAR was useful

making with some basic, non judgmental information about drugs and drug use.

Over the past year, Ted and Marcia took on the facilitation role in the classrooms and worked hard to engage youth in role plays around ‘tricky situations’ to aid in exploring how they can take responsibility for the choices they make if they are informed citizens. Year over year the number of students reached increases and the need for the program exceeds our ability to deliver it. Work with the United Way as a funder will be undertaken over the coming

year.

THRIVE (con’t)

Resident’s length of stay will be a 2-year maximum. The idea is to create a certain amount of resilience in someone and then help him or her find other accommodations. Watari will deliver the program to residents of Thrive@635 by providing the group supervision in the meeting space on the ground floor, ensuring that the ‘work’ does not happen in people’s living space. Watari will also engage with the residents to bring in alternative health resources such as acupuncture, energy healers and mindfulness practitioners. There will be one person designated as a “connector” on each of the two floors. They will not pay rent. This is based on a

model of Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto. The connector will be a social convener of sorts, supported to identify commonalities and possible alliances among residents as well as ensure that safety and comfort are respected. Support for this person will be structured and on-going.

Evaluation of the supported housing component is tantamount to success. Measuring impacts on residents’ lives across social determinants that include basic data such as sick days and WCB claims will be balanced with interviews and assessments that include hopefulness scales, com-

munity engagement and mental health/wellness state.

Our hope is to create a pilot that provides us with a roadmap to increasing the effectiveness of services in the community and thereby increase the outcomes not only for workers but those they work with.

Many thanks to Thomas Bevan for his extraordinary work on this project. The full project synopsis is available on our website.

Health Promotion/Prevention	
# presentations	176
# hours of presentations	291
# attendances total at all presentations:	
# of Grade 5 students	1637
# of grade 6 students	1559
# of grade 7 students	2036
# of male students	2584
# of female students	2648

Youth Programs reached more youth, and their families, than ever before

The year the day program spent time fine tuning the curriculum by adding in aspects that speak to the expression of emotion. Also added were individualized workbooks that youth take with them when they have completed their time in the program. Staff at the day program feel that this is another way to honor the work participants have done, encourage further growth, and enable youth to take ownership of their accomplishments. This year the day program engaged with 278 different youth with 67 youth participating in treatment. In terms of substance use the primary drug of choice of youth coming to day program was alcohol, with heroin, crack/cocaine, crystal methamphetamine, and cannabis also problematic for many of our youth. We continued to see an upward movement in the use of heroin and more youth coming for support around the use of cannabis than the previous year. The day program continued to sup-

port the growth of the field of youth work by having several students from Douglas College as practicum placements in group.

The big news for Watari Youth Services this year was about the expansion of our outreach



team. This year Mich was joined on outreach by Laura, Matt and Sandy. The team also welcomed Crystal who has taken on the position of drug and alcohol counselor with the outreach team. Saskia took on the role of case coordinator from Shannon who is staying home to raise beautiful baby Madeline. These additions funded by Vancouver Coastal Health have allowed for Watari to provide outreach in the downtown eastside 6 days a week and have enabled staff to engage with youth in a more individualized manner. Our partnerships continued to grow with the opening of Imouto House a housing resource for young women residing in the downtown eastside. Watari provides support to Imouto through the provision of support to program participants and participation on an advisory committee for the program. The teams name was also changed to better reflect the nature of the collaborative work that they do.

A story of perseverance and repatriation

A First Nations young woman arrived in the DTES from Saskatchewan and when outreach first had contact, she reported to be a 21 year old. While building rapport with youth it was revealed that she was actually 17. When in the DTES, youth had no consistent place to stay and after breaking up with one of her boyfriends, she was motivated to go and stay with her father in Calgary. Watari outreach ran with that and encouraged youth to go into MCFD Vancouver Youth Services to see about getting repatriated to Calgary

The team and Vancouver Youth Services attempted to develop a case plan to get this youth to Calgary however, she did not want to deal with a social worker - so that plan did

not work. Case planning continued and the Indian Band in Saskatchewan was contacted as a possible support. They were willing to pay for the youth to be repatriated to her home community in Saskatchewan but requested confirmation of a safe place to come home to, and that the youth really did want to come back to Saskatchewan. Working quickly, an Auntie of the youth was contacted and she agreed to providing a home for this young woman. Daily contact with the Band office was necessary to ensure the plan would succeed.

It was really helpful to have different team members working on different days to call the

band and to keep in contact with the youth daily. This was a good way to keep her motivated about the move home. The youth's substance abuse was increasing and the team knew that she had great supports back in Saskatchewan; that had set up planning for school and a healthier life style.

The team escorted her to the bus depot and waited until she was on the bus and it pulled away from the bay. When the youth arrived in Saskatchewan, she let the outreach team know that she arrived safely via Facebook.

Healthy Minds, Healthy People: How Watari is working with the 10 yr plan

In response to community needs, Watari has increased its footprint working with adults struggling with mental health issues as well as problematic substance use. Our partnership in the Downtown Community Court with the System Negotiator worker and expanded positions with Vancouver Intensive Supervision Unit (VISU) has seen our adult client population double to 300 in the last three years.

As a response to the growing needs of clients and therefore staff, training around trauma, neuroscience and mental health interventions have been a focus. Working with organizations

like ASAP BC and the BC Alliance for Mental Health & Addictions has allowed us to stay aware of better and emerging practice as well as policy.

The provincial governments' 10 Yr Plan to Address Mental Health and Substance Use reflects the need to work with individuals from a health promotion lens, supporting the approach Watari has of meeting clients where they are and attaching them to the services

they most need. Working from a family systems approach, the Community Counselling Team spent 35% of their counseling time working with parents struggling with mental health and substance use issues that are tearing their families apart. Stronger ties to Ministry for Children and Family Social Workers as well as increased partnerships with local mental health teams has allowed the families we support to experience greater success and stronger outcomes.

I feel stronger knowing
someone else is
listening and on my side'

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**Bridges to options and
opportunities**

www.watari.org

Watari is a community based social profit organization that has a mission to facilitate positive change through the design and delivery of innovative service. We serve members of Vancouver communities with a focus on the Downtown Eastside, Strathcona and East Vancouver neighbourhoods that have particular struggles around poverty, substance use and social inclusion. With a client centred and social justice approach we work with individuals and service partners across programs such as youth day treatment, community counselling, youth housing programs, Latin American outreach and counselling, adult mental health outreach and Aboriginal youth one to one work. Our goals are individualized and based on client expectations of self and our commitment to the communities we support is to be innovative and collaborate with a hope to liberate individuals/systems through knowledge and expanded experience. Each year, Watari's programs provide services to over 7000 individuals in the community.

Watari: is a Japanese word meaning a small bridge or in transition, reflecting how we work with people to bridge them with supports, services and options for a better life.

Watari is a registered charity and are able to provide tax receipts for donations

Society # S21467

Business #: 11928 8900 RR0001

Our Finances

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform an audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on our judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, we consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Buckley Dodds, Chartered Accountants

September 2012

REVENUE			
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority	\$	1,139,107	\$ 959,511
Vancouver Aboriginal Children & Family Society		130,888	147,953
Vancouver Foundation		128,500	96,888
Community Outreach Worker		75,720	59,885
Law Foundation		70,000	72,100
Ministry of Attorney General		98,727	137,418
Donations in-kind		35,400	39,110
Other grants, donations and miscellaneous Income		31,926	47,578
Service contracts		24,298	10,096
Cash donations		9,820	9,104
Oregon Research Institute		-	6,947
		1,714,454	1,586,390
EXPENSES			
Wages and benefits		1,059,965	1,028,951
Contract services		195,806	181,857
Program expenses and service costs		183,770	121,919
Bad debts		150,000	44,893
Rent and other occupancy costs		112,377	105,182
Office supplies and administration		47,107	73,948
Telecommunications		20,703	20,872
Amortization		14,821	20,215
Accounting and audit		9,601	11,531
Staff travel		4,104	4,215
Staff development		2,939	3,644
Equipment and miscellaneous repairs		1,794	7,858
Fundraising		1,739	1,799
Training programs		1,234	-
Special programs		617	500
		1,806,677	1,607,184
EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES			
	\$	(92,223)	\$ (20,774)