



A History

Watari was developed in 1986 as a response to the lack of services and programs for high-risk street involved youth in Vancouver. In 1986, the very first ***Survival Manual; a Directory of Youth Services*** was developed and published. The manual was organized with youth involved in the design and choice of information within its pages. Subsequent editions have been published in **1990, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000** and most recently **2003**. Over the years, the manual has changed to adapt to the needs of the youth and service providers who use it.

In 1987, Watari began to provide ***One to One Youth Care Services*** to the Vancouver Intensive Child Care Resource (ICCR). ICCR offered services to extremely high-risk youth within an integrated case management approach. Watari was part of this multi disciplinary team, comprised of two other agencies and five government ministries. Watari also provided the youth addictions position to this program.

In 1989, Watari was invited to conduct an ***Alcohol and Drug Needs Assessment Study*** in the Downtown East Side area of Vancouver. This was an extensive community collaboration that resulted in the establishment of the ***Youth and Family Alcohol and Drug Strategy***. This was a non-traditional approach to Alcohol and Drug programs and counseling with a strong emphasis on community development and peer leadership training.

In 1992, ***Public Education and Professional Workshops*** on working with high-risk youth were designed and implemented on an ongoing basis. Watari wrote and published an educational needs analysis in collaboration with Douglas College, ***Working With "At Risk, Marginal and Street Involved Youth"***.

In 1993, Watari established an administrative office in the Downtown Eastside area of Vancouver. During this year, Watari wrote and published a study titled ***Community Organization Strategy for At Risk Youth in the Downtown Eastside/Strathcona Area*** was written and published.

In 1993, ***Peerworks - Substance Abuse Training*** for youth peer helpers was written and published by Watari. The Trainers Guide and Youth Workbook package balances specific alcohol and drug information with tools for personal growth and awareness. This publication is still in use in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley within both youth and women's programs.

In 1993 Watari shared the responsibility for general management of the ***Street Youth Detox Program*** with three agencies and delivered the outreach, residential and training service components of the program.

In 1993-94, Watari developed and implemented a ***Caregiver Training Curriculum***. Participants in the training were employed for one to one services, residential detox, and peer support and outreach services.

In 1994, Watari wrote and published ***Working With Street Youth, A Resource Manual***

In 1995, Watari delivered a ***Peer Leadership Training Program*** for youth as part of the continuum of alcohol and drug services. Programs that grew from this training were the Slo-pitch Baseball Team, Wilderness Trips and Social / Recreational activities.

In 1996, Watari administered a community- based initiative designed to develop protection strategies for street involved children and youth at risk of sexual exploitation. The project was called ***The Child and Youth Protection Strategy***. This community based response to protecting children and youth continues to be implemented in areas of Vancouver and has been highlighted at a 2002 symposium held at the Justice Institute relating to National Crime Prevention Centre supported projects.

In 1997, Watari partnered with Douglas College, Faculty of Child, Family and Community Services to develop the ***Working with Street Involved Youth Training Program***. The training is community based and delivers a combination of academic and practical experience to offer a job ready, college accredited learning opportunity to people interested in working with street involved youth. A Mental Health Specialty was added to the training in 1999 for the third session.

In 1998, the lack of post detox transitional supports for youth prompted Watari to shift from Detox Services to the creation of the ***Street Youth Day Treatment Program***. The Youth Day Treatment Program currently provides non-residential alcohol and drug treatment through a seven week therapeutic group curriculum delivered to a maximum of nine youth. There are two counselors, program manager and two transitional outreach workers providing services to over 250 youth yearly.

In 1998, the ***Youth and Family Alcohol and Drug Services*** expanded services in an initiative called the ***Downtown Eastside HIV Strategy. The Inter-ministerial Project (IMPS)*** began as a Downtown Eastside response to working with dually diagnosed clients involved in the criminal justice system. Watari was the community partner contracted to provide outreach support to the most marginalized clients. The one to one model used for

youth within the ICCR was transferred to the adult client population – with an individualized matching for each client.

In 1998-99, a residential mental health resource, named **Space House** was developed for two specific youth. The program was individualized for the young people referred with case management the most crucial component of its success.

In 1999, Watari published the **Training Manual for Trainers and the Public** under the Child and Youth Protection Strategy.

In 2000, the **Street Youth Day Treatment Program Follow-up Study** was completed. In 2000, The ICCR was disbanded and replaced by the **Specialized Youth Response Program (SYRP)** in a partnership with another agency. Watari was responsible for One to One Services, Alcohol and Drug Counseling and Education, Therapeutic Services and the Family Support program components.

In 2001, Watari entered into the process of accreditation with **The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission (CARF)**, developing a number of in-house committees relating to maintaining standards required to provide both effective and ethical service.

In 2002, the **IMPS Project** was devolved into the **Vancouver Intensive Supervision Unit (VISU)** with the mandate now connecting more directly with probation offices in Vancouver and the Tri-Cities area. This project currently provides services to adults in the criminal justice system that have mental health and other co-existing disorders.

In 2002, Watari conducted an assessment of training needs for housing providers. From this information we developed and delivered an **education series for Eastside Caretakers and Building Managers** that included eight workshops on mental health, substance abuse, dealing with verbal and physical aggression, and health issues.

In 2002, Watari participated in a partnership with Douglas College to once again deliver the **Working with Street Youth with a Mental Health Specialty**. On-going, core funding for this program is currently being sought by Douglas College. In 2002, the **STAR Program (Stop Think Assess Respond)** is developed to provide education and information around choices, drugs and responsibility to students in grades 5 and 7. The interactive program encourages young people to recognize resilience within themselves and the community around them, promoting healthy curiosity and conversation within the classroom setting. Additionally, we are pleased that the project supports many of the core competencies the Vancouver School Board sets for children within the elementary school system. In 2013, 4300 students were served.

In 2003, our partnership in the Specialized Youth Response Program ended due to fiscal implications for the lead agency in the project.

In 2004, Watari began the **SRO Building Managers Program**, a partnership with the City of Vancouver and Western Economic Diversification. This project currently runs twice during

the year and allows community members who are working as building managers in Single Room Occupancy hotels to understand the social issues related to the population they are often the first responders to. This program includes an education series that is made available to professionals, volunteers and community members – addressing issues such as dual diagnosis, conflict resolution and accessing appropriate services. In 2004, Watari partnered with Hollyburn Family Services, Elizabeth Frye Society and Capilano Services Society to provide a full continuum of services to youth and families on the North Shore. Watari developed the youth transitioning to adulthood portfolio as well as a mentoring program for high risk youth, including community- based training models. Also in 2004, Watari partnered with the **Oregon Research Institute** and the Vancouver School Board to develop a five year research study looking at family strengthening through literacy and counseling with the urban aboriginal population. This project will work with a minimum of 120 families over four years providing contextual family therapy geared at engaging families in proactive approaches to high risk behaviours exhibited by their young person. The **Shannon's Spirit Project** is being viewed as a world demonstration site by the United Nations.

In 2004, Watari collaborated with Gordon House Youth S.E.A.R.Ch. to deliver a **Case Coordination** position with the Vancouver Agreement's Downtown Eastside Employment Strategy. This is a three year demonstration project working with chronically unemployed residents of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. This program requires outreach, assessment and employment preparedness for the clients. Many of the clients currently enrolled in the project have active addictions, criminal justice issues and histories of homelessness.

In 2006, our twentieth year in service, Watari was the successful proponent in a Request for Proposals with Vancouver Coastal Health to deliver a supported independent living program, **TTIP, Transitioning to Independence Project**. This program will support 20 young people, at different places along the addiction continuum, in maintaining housing and their goals around their own use. Still in 2006, **ARTS 101** a mentorship training project with local artists and youth at risk began. This partnership with the Contemporary Art Gallery will provide training in social issues, helping skills and community resource awareness to 30 artists yearly, matching up to 18 with youth at risk to create art that will be showcased at the Roundhouse Community Centre after each six month mentorship phase.

We proudly took on the delivery of **Hard Target Coordination** in 2006 which had been developed in the community over the last decade. The program is well suited for the agency as the focus is on creating integrated case management approaches to work effectively with street involved and hard to reach youth. In 2006 our relationship with the **Vancouver Intensive Supervision Unit (VISU)** changed from a contractor of one to one services to a partner in delivering services as part of the VISU team. In July, we hired a Mental Health Outreach worker to provide services to mental health consumers who have issues with the justice system. Early in 2007 we increased our partnership with **VISU** through funding with Vancouver Coastal Health to fill an Addiction Specialist vacancy. This addition to the team increased the effective, 'wrap around' approach that Watari supports and VISU has become known for. In true Watari 'style' we had a community event, June 26, 2007 to celebrate our **21st Anniversary** with a theme of 'coming of age'. The event at the Heritage Hall on Main Street included board, staff, clients, community residents and our colleagues in community service.

Over 150 people attended the event that included food and music from different cultures, a slide show of past events and an opportunity to celebrate our connections.

In 2008 we were awarded a **Community Outreach** position funded by the **City of Vancouver**. The position focuses on street involved youth 19-24 and is outcome driven, using case management and targeted outreach to move youth through the systems that support them.

We successfully received grant funding through the **Law Foundation of BC** for a one year pilot project beginning in September **2008**. The **System Negotiator** project is a collaborative approach to working with the assertively case managed clients through the first Downtown Community Courts in Canada. The information gleaned from this project could support the development of on-going one to one support to some of the most challenging clients in the downtown core.

2008 welcomed the 8th edition of the **Survival Manual!** In addition to a new and vibrant image on the cover, funding from **Social Planning and Research Council of BC** allowed Watari to create a web based version of the manual with it's own interactive website www.survivalmanual.org.

2009 the **Transitioning to Independence Project (TTIP)** was expanded to support homeless pregnant or parenting youth. The through funding from the **Vancouver Foundation** will allow up to 25 youth to be housed in market housing over the three years of it's funding. Evaluation will include the existing TTIP program.

2010 a new relationship with the Mac AIDS foundation has allowed our Latin American clients to create an urban community garden on the balconies of our E Hastings offices which provides fresh greens and herbs for a community meal each Monday.

2011 Vancouver Coastal Health, Watari and the City of Vancouver developed a more strategic approach to working with youth on the Downtown Eastside and a VCH youth addictions counselor was added to the youth outreach team. The youth team also began an intentional relationship supporting young women at Atira's Imouto House on the Downtown Eastside. Watari turned 25 with a community picnic and flashmob by staff!

2012 the Spencer Creo Foundation became a significant donor, supporting the TIP2 program for pregnant and parenting youth.

2013 Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society engaged Watari in the delivery of Aboriginal Youth Outreach to the Commercial Drive/Britannia Community Centre area.

Though many months in development and negotiation, 2014 began the implementation of a strategy to better support at-risk and vulnerable youth was developed that included Housing Outreach Workers and Underage Youth Workers. These positions are being supported through BC Housing, MariaMarina Foundation, MCFD and Vancouver Foundation.