

2019 Year in Review

July 3, 2020

Community Impact



1080 individual requests for support
2100 people supported
2700 volunteer hours



210 support groups
2 memorial events

Introduction

For Bereaved Families of Ontario – Ottawa Region (BFO Ottawa), 2019 was a time of transition, one where the internal environment saw a lot of change, and where we shifted focus to different aspects of our mission to the Ottawa community.

We welcomed new members to the Board of Directors. Joining Doug Cargo, Barb Hayduk, Matthew Keogh, Lianne Zitzelberger and Executive Chair Laurie Rail were Antoine Babinsky, Elaine Dean, Barrie Marfleet and Sean O'Brien. Barrie only remained on the Board for a short time, to help shape our approach to fundraising. Interestingly Antoine, Sean and Elaine previously participated together in the same BFO Ottawa's loss of child closed group in 2016.

Lorrie Beaton and Barbara Simpson took on new staff roles, with Lorrie serving as our program director and Barbara as office administrator. It is with much regret that we had to say good-bye, at least temporarily, to Jane Davey and Laurie Rail, both of whom have played important leadership roles. We'd also like to thank Lianne for her contributions to the Board, and Randy Sorenson for his staff contributions, and appreciate very much that they both have chosen to remain with BFO Ottawa as active volunteers.

Over the summer months, BFO Ottawa's new Board spent time on strategic planning, and were able to put some fundamentals in place to help with the next stage of transition. We each took responsibility for looking after a specific portfolio, and began to put a forward-looking environment in place.

We needed to find a new location that could accommodate the increased numbers of participants at our Support and Share Night each month. On the first Tuesday of every month we hold Support and Share Night, where a guest speaker joins us to talk about different aspects of grief, followed by break-out peer support groups for different types of losses: loss of child, spouse, parent, sibling, relative or friend, perinatal loss, loss by suicide, loss by substance use, for youth and by Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD).

Starting in September, we began holding Support and Share Nights at Revera Prince of Wales Manor in Nepean. The new location provides enough space to accommodate our unique requirements. We'd like to express our appreciation to the Revera Prince of Wales Manor for their generous support.

In November 2019 our hearts were heavy as we learned of the passing of one of our long-standing and beloved volunteers: Rita Myres. Rita provided professional individual peer support for many people over the years. She was an active facilitator in our Support and Share programs and closed groups, also collaborating with staff to update BFO Ottawa's library of literature resources. We miss her dearly, both as a colleague and a friend. We dedicate this poem in honour and in memory of Rita.

When Death Comes, by Mary Oliver

*When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse
to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox
when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,
I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?
And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,
and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,
and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,
and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.
When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.
When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.
I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.
I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.*

BFO Ottawa could not exist without the support of the Ottawa community and more than 40 very talented volunteers. In the fall of 2019 we were pleased to welcome six newly trained

facilitators. We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to both our volunteers and our financial supporters, who have each in their own way demonstrated their commitment to helping people in Ottawa who are grieving.

Our Mission

In October 2019 BFO Ottawa's Board of Directors updated its mission:

We inspire hope and healing for people who are grieving. We are an organization made up of people in the Ottawa region who have each experienced our own grief, and who have decided that we will share our courage and knowledge with others. We are supportive of self-care.

We are a volunteer-run organization, that appreciates the commitment we all share in supporting others who are grieving. While we have each experienced our own grief, we recognize that people grieve in deeply personal ways that are unique to them. We are here to help others based on our own experiences and our professional training.

We believe that no one should have to grieve alone. We treat every person who is grieving with kindness, dignity and respect. We believe in the importance of community, and know how important it is to create space in our society for people who are grieving.

We follow a peer support model, where trained facilitators work with group participants, who share their own stories with others. We offer a safe and supportive environment, where people can express themselves freely. We know that this often leads to new friendships, as people connect with each other in expressing their grief on a personal level.

In our approach, we create partnerships within our own community. We believe in inviting others in, and in creating open and collaborative environments where we are united in helping people in the Ottawa region who are grieving.

Community Builder's Award

The Mayor of Ottawa's City Builder Award is a civic honour created to recognize an individual, group or organization that has, through their outstanding volunteerism or exemplary action, demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to making our city a better place today and for the future. This may include life-long service, outstanding acts of kindness, inspiring charitable work, community building or any other exemplary achievements.

On March 6 Mayor Jim Watson and Somerset Ward Councillor Catherine McKenney presented the Mayor's City Builder Award to BFO Ottawa volunteers Mary Ellen Henniger and Barb Hayduk in recognition of their support for grieving families.

Community Awareness

In order to continue to build stronger awareness in the Ottawa community about the important work BFO Ottawa does, we worked with other BFO affiliates to develop a new brand, with a consistent, more uplifting and hopeful look and feel, tone and manner and messaging. We produced updated brochures in both English and French, and we were featured in Ottawa's 2019 Giving Guide thanks to the financial support of our friends Barrie Marfleet and Micheline Lepage. We continued to build up our Facebook presence, with more than 2000 followers by the end of the year. And we started work on a new Website.

In the community we met with MPP Joel Harden, who is committed to helping our organization and who was also a keynote speaker at our December Tree of Life memorial event. Barb Hayduk and Laurie Rail participated in the resource share event hosted by the Champlain Local Health Integrated network (LHIN) Leadership in Bereavement group. Barb and Lorrie Beaton delivered a bereavement workshop to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) oncology team. We presented at one of 100 Women Who Care's quarterly gatherings, to The Royal's, Royal Ottawa Place (a long-term care facility) and to the Social Work and Gerontology (SWAG) group.

Laurie Rail helped raise more than \$7800 for BFO Ottawa programs, through a Trivia Night fundraiser held in Russell in May. In October, Ian Henderson's contributed proceeds from the Mindfulness Grief Labyrinth in Kanata to BFO Ottawa. Our expert volunteers took their own initiative to raise funds too, through yoga workshops, walks, open houses, golf tournaments, curling banquets and the sale of gingerbread houses.

Lorraine Lefebvre, one of BFO Ottawa's volunteers, shared her story of loss with Ottawa Citizen's Senior Writer, Bruce Deachman, who wrote an in-depth feature series that highlighted the opioid crisis in Ottawa. This series recently won the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario's annual media award for best in-depth feature or series in a daily newspaper.

Programs Overview

BFO Ottawa was the recipient of three different grants totalling more than \$25,000. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Abundance Canada for helping us build our organizational capacity, to the Ottawa Community Foundation for helping us grow our French-language programs, and to the City of Ottawa for helping us grow our expertise in substance use.

In 2019 our office responded to more than 1080 requests for support. Each of our Support and Share programs and our closed groups are led by trained facilitators who are experienced with a similar loss. Everyone is welcome to participate in our programs and memorial events. Because we rely on the support of the Ottawa community to continue to offer our programs, suggested donations are appreciated, however not required.

There were an average of 76 participants at each of our monthly Support and Share Nights, for a total of 911 for the year. Every week we hold a Support and Share Afternoon, which deals with multiple types of losses, and a Support and Share Walk, which takes place behind

Parliament Hill. On average, each week in 2019, we had 14 participants join our Support and Share Afternoons or Walks each week, for a total of 704 for the year.

Twice a year we offer closed groups, which are groups where the same group of participants explore their grief more deeply together over 8-10 weeks. In the spring 70 participants joined one of our closed groups for loss of child, spouse, parent, sibling, relative or friend, by suicide or for family art therapy. In the fall, we ran closed groups for loss of child, spouse, parent, sibling, relative or friend, and by suicide, with a total of 37 participants. Feedback from participants is overwhelmingly positive, precisely because these types of losses can be so devastating. It is by coming together with others in a non-judgemental, safe environment that they are able to begin to heal in a healthy way, finding some comfort and offering hope for the future.

Thanks to the grant from the Ottawa Community Foundation, we have now trained three French-language facilitators. We've translated literature about grief into French, we've made connections with 20 francophone businesses or organizations, and we've acquired new French educational material. We produced our brochure in French, and we prepared to start offering our first Support and Share Night in French, for early in 2020.

The City of Ottawa grant helped us improve the support we offer to more than 200 people in Ottawa who have lost a loved one due to substance use. In November we hired a loss by substance use coordinator, and we offered a professional development workshop for our trained volunteers on the topic. We created literature specific to this type of loss and its impact on grief, and in November we started offering peer support groups at Support and Share Nights for loss by substance use.

Annual Memorial Events

Every year BFO Ottawa holds two memorial events. In June 2019 our 8th annual butterfly memorial event was again held at Beechwood, Canada's National Cemetery. More than 250 people were in attendance, as they listened to live music and guest speakers in Beechwood's Sacred Space, and then released their live butterflies in Beechwood's Botanical Gardens. Butterflies are a universal symbol of hope and transformation, and it is our hope that the butterflies we released will take our private messages to our loved ones. As a community we raised \$10,500, which goes directly to support BFO Ottawa programs.

In December, we held the Tree of Life memorial event. This event takes place just before the holidays, when people tend to feel their grief more acutely. As a community, some 150 participants came together to listen to guest speakers, light candles and decorate our tree of life with ornaments in memory of our loved ones. Together we raised more than \$2000 for BFO Ottawa programs at this event.

We estimate that volunteers dedicated 100 hours to supporting these two events.

Finances

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Ottawa Profit and Loss

	2019	2018
Income		
Government Funding and Foundations	\$ 19,950	\$ 13,750
Programs & Community Education	\$ 75,742	\$ 29,836
Event Fundraising	\$ 22,496	\$ 22,472
Total Income	\$ 118,188	\$ 66,058
Expenses		
Salaries	\$ 38,835	\$ 32,482
Consultants & Honorariums	\$ 45,123	\$ 16,268
Operations	\$ 25,361	\$ 22,396
Marketing and Outreach	\$ 5,555	\$ 2,163
Other Expenses & Fees	\$ 5,130	\$ 2,723
Total Expenses	\$ 120,003	\$ 76,032
Profit(Loss)	\$ (1,815)	\$ (9,974)

NOTES :

- Most donations recorded in last 5 years
- Government funding includes Ottawa funding for Substance Use and French programming.
- BFO lost \$10k funding from anonymous donor after 2018.
- Programs drove significant revenues in 2019 vs 2018.
 - ✓ \$29k in donations from individual donors, many in memory of Rita Mvres.
 - ✓ Closed groups generated over \$22k
 - ✓ SSD/N and other non receipted donations generated over \$20k
- Event fundraising - Butterfly, Tree of Life and Trivia Nights generated \$22k
- Salaries and consultants represent the largest year over year increase in expenses, with a commitment for BFO to staff at appropriate levels.

Bereaved Families of Ontario - Ottawa Balance Sheet As of December 31, 2019

	2019	2018
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash & Cash Equivalent	\$ 69,131	\$ 64,599
Total Accounts Receivable	\$ 1,407	\$ 3,318
Prepaid expenses	\$ 2,640	\$ 1,967
Total Assets	\$ 73,178	\$ 69,883
Liabilities and Equity		
Deferred Revenue/Contributions	\$ 11,109	\$ 6,000
Total Liabilities	\$ 11,109	\$ 6,000
Equity		
Opening Balance Equity	\$ 0	\$ 0
Retained Earnings	\$ 63,883	\$ 73,857
Profit for the year	\$ (1,815)	\$ (9,974)
Total Equity	\$ 62,068	\$ 63,883
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 73,178	\$ 69,883

NOTES :

BFO Ottawa entered 2020 in a very strong financial position.

- Cash + GIC
- HST
- Insurance
- Unused grant contributions

Volunteer Hours

BFO Ottawa relies on the support of trained facilitators to help run our Support and Share programs, closed groups and offering individual peer support. Volunteers also help us with event registrations, updating literature and preparing presentation material in total we estimate that volunteers dedicated 1100 hours of their time to supporting BFO Ottawa programs.

Our Board of Directors provides both leadership and operational support to BFO Ottawa. Together they estimated that they spent 1500 hours supporting BFO Ottawa in 2019. Cumulatively that's a lot of committed and courageous effort, from a dedicated team of volunteers who are willing to spend their time to help others who are experiencing grief!

2020 Outlook

In early 2020 we were actively preparing to offer our French Support and Share Nights, and to introduce our new mobile-friendly, search-optimized Website. Our facebook followers have continued to grow organically. What we couldn't have foreseen, was a global pandemic: Covid-19, and the impact it would have both on our organization and on people in Ottawa who are grieving. We have adapted our programs to be offered by video conference, in our efforts to support and engage more people. Our butterfly memorial event will take place by video this year, with Scott and Anne Oake as our distinguished guest speakers. It has not been an easy time, and our donations are down. We are hopeful that our revised programming is helping people during this difficult period. We intend to increase our marketing, fundraising and grant-writing efforts, and we will continue to focus on building our organizational capacity so that we can increase the impact we have in the Ottawa community in 2020.