



## BCACC'S NEW INTEGRATED BYLAWS

**A**s of June 29, 2018, BCACC's new integrated bylaws went into effect, setting the course for a more focused pathway for the association and its members.

"We are at the beginning of an implementation process," says Carolyn Fast, BCACC's Executive Director. "Part of that implementation is to develop further the policies and practices that go along with the implementation of the bylaws."

Getting to this implementation stage has taken tremendous time and effort. The revision process began in 2014 and was initiated to ensure continued relevancy and to ensure processes are as efficient as possible. The new bylaws are the accumulated work of member delegations supported by experts in communications, facilitation,

and law, as well as a transition team and the many RCCs who participated in reviewing and discussing revisions.

To clearly understand the reasoning behind the new bylaws, you need to look back even farther than 2014. The original bylaws were created in 1988 and modelled from the Social Workers Society.

"The social workers at that time were very similar to BCACC, in that they were not

governed by statute, but they were self-regulating," says Glen Grigg, RCC, Chair of FACTBC.

A decade later, in 1998, the bylaws were revised to clarify the two purposes of the BCACC: to serve as a membership and to protect the public.

"In order to protect the public, we were actively advocating — as we still — for a college of counselling therapists," says Grigg. "Part of that advocacy was to

create, essentially, a process parallel to what a college under the Health Professions Act would look like in order to demonstrate the administrative and practical competence of this profession to function like a regulated profession.”

In other words, aspects of the 1998 bylaws were developed so BCACC could be a kind of “shadow college,” proving that not only could it run as a college, but also that it should. However, professional colleges must be mandated by the government, and despite BCACC’s advocacy efforts, by 2014, there was still no college. Moreover, BCACC’s dual purpose — serving the membership and serving the public — had become a double bind of conflicting interests.

In March 2014, FACTBC — Federation of Associations for Counselling Therapy in BC — was established to reduce that conflict and redouble advocacy efforts for the creation of a college as a means of protecting the public.

“That meant that advocacy for the public could be undertaken by BCACC by supporting FACTBC, and it meant that the association was no longer in so much of a double bind,” says Grigg. “The

**It’s a tremendous statement that this group of professionals has agreed to function as a voluntarily self-regulating association, because they want the best for the profession, and they want the best for their clients and the safest practice.**

creation of FACTBC did not eliminate but it substantially reduced the inherent conflict of interest.”

FACTBC serves public interests — specifically, by pointing out to government that without a college, the public is not protected — while BCACC can continue to serve member interests and protect members’ clients. The new bylaws support the separation of those interests by moving BCACC away from general protection of the public and reinforcing the contract with the members to uphold a code of ethics and a standard of practice.

“We recognize that BCACC is not a regulator in the same sense as a legislated government-backed college,”

says Grigg. “Our powers to regulate are limited to the terms of a contract, and our new bylaws reflect that reality and limitation.”

In addition to clarifying BCACC’s purpose, the new bylaws also streamlined processes, including the process for amending bylaws.

“Often bylaws are created at annual general meetings,” says Grigg. “Then, when they become contentious and before the courts, people say, ‘Well, that wasn’t a very well-attended meeting, and I don’t think this is a valid bylaw.’”

Grigg explains that because it is a high-stakes process that can affect a counsellor’s professional reputation and access to income, a more robust process for ratifying bylaws was needed, so they wouldn’t be so readily subject to being dismissed, should there be any recourse to a civil process.

“Members will find that the bylaws give more power to committees to make policy, and that keeps the bylaws more streamlined, easier to read and interpret, and less cluttered with specifics,” says Grigg. “It also makes the association more responsive and flexible when laws change or political context changes.”

However, the new process does not make BCACC less accountable, because, like a bylaw, a policy is also a public document.

“There’s a very explicit and rigorous accountability process — it’s not like someone can just decide, ‘I’m going to change this rule,’” says Grigg.

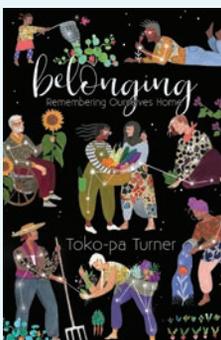
Fast says the new bylaws further strengthen member commitment and credibility.

“It’s a tremendous statement that this group of professionals has agreed to function as a voluntarily self-regulating association, because they want the best for the profession, and they want the best for their clients and the safest practice,” she says. “They voluntarily agree to follow the ethics, principles, and guidelines, and, if there is an inquiry, that member has agreed to be part of a process with their colleagues to reframe those situations, learn from them, and go forward with improved practice.”

“It is the highest level of voluntary self-management they can do,” she says. “Members make a major commitment, and it’s to the credit of the association and all the members that they’ve signed on.”

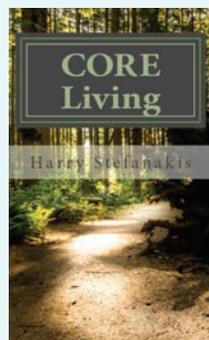


## READING LIST FOR YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS



### **Belonging: Remembering Yourself Home**

by Toko-pa Turner (Her Own Room Press, 2017) — Turner explores the origins of estrangement, how that alienation affects the choices we make as individuals and as a culture, and the skills to which we can apprentice ourselves to restore a sense of belonging in our lives.



### **Core Living: 8 Choices for Living Well**

by Harry Stefanakis, Ph.D. (Create Space Independent Publishing) — Using stories, humour, and practical tips, Stefanakis, a Vancouver psychologist, explains why we get lost in life and how to find our way using eight choices to take charge of our lives, as well as strategies to overcome obstacles.

# Aging in a healing and thriving community

BY NADIA STEFYN

**O**ften overlooked and under supported, seniors in our society frequently fall through the cracks. Many older adults find themselves isolated for increasingly longer periods, as the loss of loved ones, mobility issues, fewer friends, reduced finances, or language skills begin to erode independence. Having lost those closest to them, seniors often yearn for both physical and emotional intimacy. On top of this, physical limitations can increase dependency on children — not just for getting around, but also for social connection.

A program run by Family Services of Greater Vancouver aims to help change that by supporting seniors in a meaningful way to fulfill social and emotional needs. Vital Connections is a free counselling program offering low-barrier emotional support for seniors dealing with loss, grief, anxiety, loneliness, and isolation among other challenges. The program helps seniors find new ways to continue living a purposeful and fulfilling life — for example, by understanding how to move on after the death of a loved one while still honouring their memory; learning how to develop new friendships to drive intellectual stimulation; and finding activities such as theatre or dance as an outlet for physical expression. The Vital Connections counsellor is also a senior and is, thus, better able to relate to client experiences.

A key factor in the success of the Vital Connections program is its location at Century House, one of Canada’s first centres catering to adults aged 50+. It’s a hive of activity year round, offering a vast range of free or low-cost social programs and clubs. Seniors can complement counselling sessions with myriad activities to counter isolation. These activities provide mental, emotional, and physical fulfillment and include games, dance and fitness classes, language skills classes, arts, and music. Fluid referrals are made between programs, enhancing effectiveness and creating a web of support under one roof.

One example of a connection-fostering activity at Century House is the Community Kitchens program. Once or twice per month, participants learn to cook a new meal and enjoy it together afterwards. Program manager Pat Steiner says that while the Community Kitchens program teaches valuable life skills, many participants come first and foremost for the social aspect.

his long days sitting at home. Like many seniors, he had come to rely on his family for social connection. As supportive as his children were, they were not enough to fill his social needs. He attended Community Kitchens and tapped into a strong and supportive social network. From there, he discovered a number of other programs at Century House, including computer skills classes. Having a place to go each week to



**Having a place to go each week to meet friends and make new ones has taken the pressure off his family relationships and given him a new sense of purpose.**

“Community Kitchens is in an intimate setting, ideal for building connections among seniors whose paths may never cross otherwise,” says Steiner. “Even seniors with limited English are able to connect through the universal language of food.”

Steiner described one senior whose wife had passed, and he was struggling to fill

meet friends and make new ones has taken the pressure off his family relationships and given him a new sense of purpose.

The interconnected programs at Century House are a great example of communities and organizations working together to facilitate independence and contribute to the quality of life for seniors.

“Many seniors end up becoming surrogates for each other, providing support and friendship,” says Steiner. “As a society, we need to do a lot more to support seniors than we do.”

*Nadia Stefyn is the marketing and communications manager for Family Services of Greater Vancouver. fsgv.ca*