

OUR MEMBERS' VOICES

WE ASKED OUR MEMBERS – “Why do you belong to BCASW?”

Here are some of their responses received in our 2011 survey.

BCASW provides a collective **voice** for social issues/social justice. It also provides a place and a way to advance our profession.

I really enjoy the **networking** and information aspects of being a member of the BCASW. I love participating in the annual conference, reading the quarterly magazine and seeing the monthly updates and other emails. I like how easy BCASW makes it to stay current with social work in BC.

I originally became a member to access the professional liability insurance policy. However as a new member I quickly realized that membership provided so much more, including up to date **information** on social work issues, employment opportunities, a vehicle for networking and connecting with other social workers, providing a strong united voice and advocacy for issues affecting clients.

BCASW is a great way to stay **current** with educational and networking opportunities for social workers; especially those in private practice.

As a fairly new graduate who is not always able to find work in the field, the BCASW is a great way to help me stay **connected** to the social work community.

I don't understand why you would not want to be a member. The newsletters and wonderful bulletin information is **rewarding** in itself. It pays to be member and support a career you are proud to be a part of.

Being active in BCASW has allowed me to stay in touch with social workers in a variety of settings, and not just my own workplace. It has been educational, enjoyable and **inspiring**.

I am a member because I want to be connected to the profession in addition to my workplace. I want to know what the issues are that are facing other social workers as well as clients/ families that are not in my field of practice. BCASW helps me to keep connected.

I have just re-joined BCASW after years as non-member. It's the only voice of professional social workers in the province and by joining you'll have more influence than by not.

It is important to the profession of social work to have an association that speaks for all of us, that helps up communicate with one another, that helps the public understand the role of social workers in society, that promotes education and ethical practice, and that recognizes social work accomplishments.

Being a member promotes all of the above and more that I have neglected to mention.

Joining BCASW represents a **commitment** to the profession. It signifies engagement in the profession and support for the activities of the professional association. These activities include advocacy for social workers, advocacy for marginalized populations, and advocacy for progressive change to health and social policies.

Being a member - reduces the sense of isolation I often feel as a result of being the only social worker in my workplace - helps me reinforce my beliefs in social justice - **stimulates** my mind - provides a voice for me that I would not otherwise have due to the political nature of my workplace.

BCASW assisted me in gaining **employment**, I get the opportunity to meet like minded social workers, it stops me from feeling isolated in my profession; I get regular information from monthly e-bulletins. It is connected to CASW and the IFSW. I like to have a professional association certificate on my wall in my employment. I have met some great social workers through the association.

I tell social work students and working social workers that I consider it to be an integral part of my profession to belong to a professional organization that works to **educate** and advocate on behalf of social workers.

The association provides **support** to social workers in who work in isolation, either geographically or vis-a-vis their discipline. There is a great deal of online and in-person education, information and up-to-date research transmitted to social workers who want to stay on top of their profession. There are opportunities for moral, as well as clinical and career, support. All in all, if someone really identifies with social work values and wants to excel at their calling, it is essential to maintain a community of like-minded people to help you stay grounded, focused and vital.

When you become a member of BCASW, you gain easy access to **knowledge** on many levels: professional knowledge easily available (even in your own living room) through their conferences and workshops, knowledge about many other agencies you need connection with - but in particular a very strong support system of like-minded professionals.

It is nice to have an association behind me in case I have the need to **consult** about an ethical matter or want support; i.e. legal or professional.

It makes me feel like part of something larger than just myself which is nice in a field that can feel quite isolated.

I feel supported. I have backup and professional **consultation** on ethical issues.

BCASW provides peer support, a forum for dialogue and discussion on important social work issues, professional development opportunities, and pride in the profession. Our local chapter is very active and it is a great way to keep in touch with other social workers that you would normally not see on a regular basis.

I feel it is important to promote Social Work as a profession. I work in an interdisciplinary environment (health care) and there is a lot of role competition - to have a strong identity as a social worker is essential to doing a good job for my clients. Being a member of BCASW helps me maintain this identity. The Association also provides a voice for Social Work and can play a role to shape our **public image**.

An important human trait is to belong and to feel a **part of**. Belonging to BCASW has been very helpful to me personally and as a professional in many ways. I am proud to be a social worker and to gain continued knowledge and experience from others in my chosen profession.

The association gives a base from which to work - the ethics and guidelines to follow. Socializing with other members is gratifying and being part of a peer consultation group provides ongoing education and a chance to improve services to clients.

I feel it demonstrates my commitment to my profession which is very important for me. I think it's about professional accountability and assurance to the clients I serve that I take my professional responsibilities seriously.

*It helps me feel connected to other social workers in BC which makes me feel that I **belong** to a larger group of colleagues who hold the same values and beliefs in their profession.*

I have always belonged to my professional association - in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and British Columbia. The reason why I belong has to do with my identification with social work, and my need to keep up with what is going on in the profession. Also, I relate to those who take their membership seriously.

I would share some stories of my own joys with getting involved with other social workers to address issues of professional concern and to end the isolation that social workers in Health feel sometimes in our workplaces.

I am a member as I really enjoy reading the monthly bulletin, full of relevant, accurate information about public policy, about education and training. It reinforces my feeling that I am not alone in this sometimes challenging work. It contributes to my sense of **professional identity**.

I always buy posters: It is also a way to show that I am a proud social worker and want to help advertise the work we do to the public.

Social work is a caring profession and many times it is difficult to have a professional social life with all the myriad responsibilities.

The BCASW offers local branch options where social workers may collaborate in their local areas and meet once a month to encourage each other etc.

It gives a community to the professional designation and a place in which to find like minded professionals, topics that interest and continuing education.

I appreciate having a reliable source of information on trends and activities in the social work field. I also have extended health **benefits** through the Association - the availability of this is one factor in allowing me to take risks in my career and to go into private practice.

It is a statement about who we are as professionals... It can offer many benefits such as training, link up with other professionals and dialogue.

A professional organization like this speaks for us and for the rights of our clients.

I have often said that "If BCASW didn't exist, we would have to invent it!" I believe strongly in having a collective voice for our profession and, in particular, a body that can advocate for the profession and articulate thoughtful professional **commentary** on matters of public policy and public interest.

It's about **pride** in your profession, a link to what's going on, a piece of the bigger picture.

It is important to me to stay connected with my professional organization, especially since I practice in a rural area.

The organization also keeps me informed about current issues when I don't necessarily have the time to do research.

Membership enables us to have a united voice on social justice issues (while we may still have some differences of opinion) and this enables us to carry a great deal more weight in working for **change** than if we were not members.

Membership in BCASW is how I personally stay connected with current events in BC related to the social work profession.

The Perspectives newsletter is well written and helps me to stay in touch with the diversity of the profession.

The organization helps to **professionalize** social workers.

I joined the association because I want to have updated and current information of what's happening in the field. I feel I belong to a professional group and one that I could turn to for **help** and consultation in regards to delivering social work service.

*I am a new social worker and think it will help me find a job. Having our own association gives us a **forum** to discuss political issues, build solidarity and act politically around those issues. Most of us work for government and we are somewhat spread out - which means that we don't get this opportunity at work and/or with our work peers.*

The professional organization is the only body that can speak on behalf of social workers and **advocate** for us. With social workers being subsumed within their employers' culture, we need a strong voice for social workers and a way to network/get support. It is the collective voice for social justice and takes action based social work values and ethics.