



**1983** – AADAC was considering implementing a different treatment program designed specifically for women, as women often experienced addiction for different reasons than men, and as such, they required a different program model and support system. AADAC continued to see a rise in the number of women seeking treatment for addictions but believed that the need was much larger than statistics showed at the time. Women had begun to seek treatment sooner for their addictions, and as there were more women working in executive roles, they had greater access to employee assistance programs. In Canada at that time, 60% of women who had an addiction to alcohol, were also addicted to drugs.

Research into alcohol addiction was still a men’s domain for the most part, but there was evidence that women developed cirrohsis of the liver much faster than men, and their overall health deteriorated more quickly as well. The highest rate of alcohol abuse among women, were those who worked outside the home and those seeking employment. Twice as many married women as singles had addiction issues, which were mainly attributed to the dual stresses of needing a career coupled with the guilt of not spending as much time with their children.

It was a well kept secret that That Villa had been providing women’s addiction treatment services in Calgary for over a decade, but this was hardly by design. At this time, there were only a handful of women’s agencies across Canada, and for the most part, the public at large were not aware they existed, which made fundraising very challenging.

In 1983, The Villa applied for Alberta Government lottery funding with the hope of establishing a family treatment centre and upgrading the exercise room, which consisted of a rebounder and one donated exercise bike. Ruth Hartley, Executive Director, The Villa North and Diane Sloan, Program Co-ordinator, continued to make the argument for gender-specific treatment for women. They hoped that both society and government would recognize the need for additional funding for women’s, much needed addiction treatment services, and that they would begin to receive the same attention as more well-known programs for men.

The Villa’s program allowed Clients to put their health first, and time to look after themselves, which was a change from what many women experience while in the role of caretakers for their families. The gender-specific therapy groups provided women with a more comfortable environment to disclose their stories. In mixed groups, women tend to take a background role to men, and have difficulty discussing their feelings around abuse, rape or incest. They may also revert to game playing which other women recognize but men often don’t. The Villa’s two locations provided services to approximately 250 women each year.



The Calgary Olympic Saddledome opened on October 16, 1983