



WEST CENTRAL WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

MESSAGE FROM **THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND THE BOARD CHAIR**

What a year this last one has been! When we set the course for 2020/21, none of us knew that we would be in the grips of a global pandemic that would create turmoil for all of us, but most significantly for the community that we work with. COVID-19 required us to act quickly to modify service delivery and to close gaps that were created by shut downs and restrictions due to the necessary public health measures. We are SO proud of our amazing team that rose to this challenge, time and again, and never failed to continue to walk with our community to ensure their health and well-being.

Throughout the year, the Centre also continued to deepen our understanding on how to build an anti-oppressive framework for our work. Our board focused on building a board that better reflects the community that we serve, and committed to governance and anti-racism training. As a staff team, we have reflected deeply on our role as a non-Indigenous agency in the uncolonization of our sector and worked on increasing



our knowledge around gender diversity. This important work will continue in the upcoming year.

We have also been working hard on expanding our footprint in the community. The pandemic shone a light on many of the gaps that women and gender diverse people in our community face. It was a stark reminder that without intentional

focus, these are the folks that get left behind. The housing crisis, poverty and gender-based violence rates rose dramatically in 2020 and our focus as an organization in 2021/22 will be to respond to these growing needs. Stay tuned for more news on what's next for us!

We want to send a huge thank you to our funders and donors, who really showed up for us this year, so that we could show up for community. Nothing we do is possible without you. To our board, staff, mentors, students and volunteers, your commitment to the work we do is unmatched. Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our community. To the many sister agencies we worked alongside this year, we could not have weathered this storm without you. And to the community with which we work alongside, your never-ending strength and resiliency is such a reminder that we can overcome hard things when we work together.



With Gratitude,
Lorie English, Executive Director
Cate Friesen, Board Chair

WCWRC AND COVID-19

COVID-19's impact on us is tremendous. Women, BIPOC, and 2SLGBTQ+ people are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and struggling to get by with fewer resources.

Our Drop-In operated at a reduced capacity all year, in-person group programs stopped or moved online, and some resources were redirected to new emergency supports.

However, with your support we never gave up. Our Street Outreach Van (see page 10), emergency food hampers, and safely distanced one-on-one supports helped hundreds of women and families get through this time. Hundreds more received services at the door, like take-out meals, winter gear, and hygiene kits.

Partnerships with sister agencies (see page 14) allowed us to pool our resources and step up to meet community needs. Donors responded to support community in remarkable ways. It was a wonderful reminder that we are always stronger together. Thank you to all who worked alongside us!

**STAFF, MENTORS,
AND BOARD MEMBERS**



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PROFILE: JOJO

My name is Jolene Wilson; the community calls me Jojo. My spirit names are *Misko Migizi kwe*, *Giimiwan Googookoo* (Red Eagle Woman, Raining Owl) and I am from the Wolf Clan.

I was very lost for 15 years: I lived on the street, homeless and addicted, estranged from my loved ones and children. Around 2015, a worker brought my 12-year-old daughter to me. I didn't know I had rights to my kids. The knowledge and kindness I received and realizing I had a chance to be a mom again empowered me to change.

It was tough coming off the streets. CFS wasn't supportive and we were struggling financially. My friend recommended I visit WCWRC to receive hygiene products and help to find a better place. When I arrived, I seen a poster for "Our Mothers Standing Strong," an empowerment group for women reuniting with their children. And I thought, that's exactly what I need. The program and the facilitator Lisa Spring really cemented my role as a mom. It was the best thing I'd ever done. From there it just snowballed.



I found a better place and got a spot in the WE WIL program in 2016. WE WIL was phenomenal because it really opened my eyes and pulled out skills I didn't know I had. I worked on becoming a better version of myself and got a position as a mentor.

WHEN YOU HEAL A WOMAN, YOU'RE
HEALING ALL OF THE WOMEN
AROUND HER. HER FAMILY, AND THE
COMMUNITY. **WE HEAL TOGETHER.**

In 2017, I became Casual Staff, which was huge. Staff! Then they gave me a key to the building and I was like, they trust me! They really trust me! It was so cool. On June 12, 2017, I received a letter stating I am no longer eligible for Employment and Income Assistance. I did it! I actually did it. This was a pivotal moment. I keep this letter hanging in my office to remind me of who I am and what I am capable of. That's empowerment. By

2018, I was working on our gender-based strategy to end homelessness in Winnipeg, *Connecting the Circle*. I'm so proud of that. I've never seen my name in a book. It blows my mind!

Now, I'm the Centre's Knowledge Keeper and the Restoring the Balance Coordinator, a trauma-informed program working to restore the balance between Indigenous ways of thinking and being and today's systems and societies.

I always say this place gets the best of me because it's brought out the best in me and think that's a fair trade. That's my tobacco for West Central medicine!

Having lived experience allows for connection. It's heart work. That's another way to give my tobacco: making space for participants to feel empowered and like they matter. West Central took all my impossibilities and paved the way for me to make them possible. This is my family. I can't imagine being anywhere else or doing anything else.

My biggest wish is that every woman gets the same opportunities I was offered here. In my culture, when you heal a woman, you're healing all the women around her: her family and the community. We heal together.



PROFILE: **ALEX**

When Alex first connected with the Centre in 2016, she was involved in an abusive relationship that was exacerbating her mental health struggles. She described her first experience spending time here as both awkward and comfortable, “I came in, grabbed some coffee, sat there by myself for a bit... I didn’t have to really worry about anything.”

“THE FACT THAT [THE CENTRE] WAS WOMEN ONLY WAS A BIG FACTOR IN MAKING THAT CHOICE [TO COME].”

She wanted to continue to get to know people and picked up a volunteer application to do so while she was working. Alex soon became known as one of the most efficient and hard-working volunteers to set foot into the Community Kitchen.

“[WCWRC] CHANGED MY LIFE COMPLETELY,” SHE TELLS US. “I’VE GOT FULL INDEPENDENCE... **IT’S GIVEN ME A LOT OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE WHO I CAN TURN TO AND TALK TO.**”

She transitioned into WE WIL: Women Empowering Women Into Leadership Program in 2018 and, after graduation, entered the Mentorship Program. Mentors gain valuable work experience helping with the work of the Centre and receive an honourarium.

As a Mentor, Alex continued to demonstrate impressive work ethic and resilience. During this time, she also began accessing supports at the Centre to leave her relationship and obtain housing of her own.

The Mentorship Program and HOMES Program collaborated and worked tirelessly with her to support her into her first independent living situation. When asked how she feels now, Alex simply said, “I’m free.”

“I FEEL GREAT ABOUT IT. IT’S BEEN ALMOST TWO YEARS IN MY APARTMENT, ALONE. **IT’S ALL MINE.**”

Alex demonstrated unfaltering commitment to the Centre, our community, and her Mentor position throughout the pandemic. She has since transitioned into a volunteer role and is always willing to help out where needed.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

MENTORSHIP AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

WE WIL: Women Empowering Women into Leadership program

Honourarium-based Employment Training

Volunteer Placements

Student Placements

HOUSING

HOMES – housing and income security support

More Than 4 Walls Housing First Program

Support for women exiting the Justice System

Emergency hotel stays for homeless women during COVID

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Washroom, Shower, Laundry, Phone, Internet Access

Access to hygiene items, harm reduction supplies, traditional medicines, and extreme weather gear and supplies.

Information and referrals to other services and organizations

Community Workshops

Winter Warming Centre in partnership with Spence Neighbourhood Association

Meal Program and emergency food hampers

Outreach service for people experiencing homelessness

Community garden

RESTORING THE BALANCE

Family Violence Prevention: Red Road to Healing and Men's Circle

Ceremonies and events

Elder and Knowledge Keeper supports

Access to medicines and medicine picking

NEWCOMER PROGRAMS

Settlement Services

1-1 counselling

Healing Together group program

GBV Case Management

Conversation Circle and workshops

Art Therapy

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

1-1 Job readiness support and group programming

Employment and skills training opportunities

Employment-focused conversation Circles



Twenty years ago, in 2001, a short pilot project called the Women's Empowerment Project became the West Central Women's Resource Centre. Finally, the neighbourhood had a safe place for women to go to access resources and participate in programs to improve their lives.

Over 20 years, we have grown from one staff and a small handful of programs to now over 40 staff and all the programs listed here.

Countless women and families have achieved their goals, learned to believe in themselves, and are still with us today because of this Centre.

We look forward to what the next 20 years will bring and we hope you'll come along for the journey!

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: **STREET OUTREACH**

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on important service gaps in our community. One of those gaps is serving women who cannot come get food, hygiene, and other basic needs at our front door.

COVID made it much more difficult for women to come to us, so we immediately made the decision to go to them. We quickly transformed the Centre's van into a Street Outreach Van in April 2020. It's been running ever since, and it's one pandemic service we will be keeping on when things return to normal (whatever that means!). Our Street Outreach Van is one of the only ones in Winnipeg focussed on women and operating seven days a week.

WHAT OUR STREET OUTREACH TEAM DOES:

The Van goes out to support those who are unsheltered in the inner-city, including encampments and bus shelters. It is staffed with two trained outreach workers who can check in



on the wellbeing of folks and find them additional services and supports, if they need them.

“Women who are living unsheltered need caring, compassion and understanding. Especially in these difficult days of disconnection and isolation. We all need to know someone cares about us,” says Lorie English, Executive Director of WCWRC.

We also connect women with our one-on-one housing supports when they're ready and other services depending on their needs.

Inside the van you'll find hot coffee, meals, water, hygiene kits, harm reduction supplies, bus tickets, and whatever our community needs at that moment. For instance, over the winter the back of the van was piled high with winter coats and boots of all sizes!

This service was made possible by our generous funders and over 100 donations by thoughtful and caring donors like you. In April, we raised over \$50,000 to maintain this crucial service. Thank you!

“With the generosity of Winnipeggers, we were able to keep a vital community support resource on the road that is saving lives,” says English.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY: WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND COVID

The need for these on-the-ground services grows as women's instability grows. The most recent Street Census estimated that there may be around 3,500 women experiencing homelessness in the city. This number has no doubt increased since women in our community are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

“In my over eight years at WCWRC, I've never seen such difficult circumstances for women in our community,” says English.

“Women are in precarious situations and have fewer places to turn to because of COVID.”

Women are more likely to live in poverty, be employed in sectors with high layoffs, and since the eviction ban was lifted, many lost their homes and ended up either couch-surfing or on the street.

As we wrote in our 2019 strategy to end homelessness *Connecting the Circle*, women often do not feel safe in emergency shelters and will choose the street or staying with a stranger instead. There is a great need for more places of safety for women and gender diverse people throughout our city.

MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT

At WCWRC, we meet people where they are at, without judgement and using trauma-informed and harm-reduction approaches. We build trust by working with compassion from an empowerment model that is woman-centred.

Because of your support, we have been able to offer some safety and supports directly to women experiencing homelessness; by making sure they are ok and helping them with what they need.

If you want a feel for what Street Outreach is like, check out our video on our YouTube channel. And give us a wave if you see us on the street!



227

PEOPLE SUPPORTED
WITH HOUSING

28 PEOPLE HOUSED AND 32 PEOPLE
REHOUSED TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS
THROUGH HOMES AND MT4W

37 PEOPLE HOUSED THROUGH
HOTEL STAYS PROGRAM



74

PEOPLE SUPPORTED
BY SETTLEMENT STAFF

142 HOURS OF COUNSELLING

27

PEOPLE SUPPORTED FOR
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

340

 MEALS
EACH
WEEK

THAT IS A
TOTAL OF **17680**
MEALS FOR THE YEAR

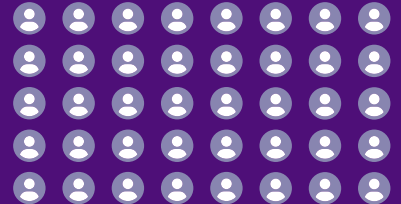


4000
FOOD KITS TO
FAMILIES IN NEED
OF SUPPORT

45 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

BY THE OUTREACH PROGRAM

EVERY DAY



SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX CHALLENGES

As we have been learning through this difficult time, when we work together, we can find solutions to the most complex challenges.

WARMING CENTRE

In winter 2020/21, WCWRC partnered with Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) to open a low-barrier, daytime Warming Centre to serve the homeless and food-insecure members of our West End Community.

Community members had access to Magnus Eliason Recreation Centre on Langside to safely warm up and sit down for 30 minutes to safely enjoy a hot meal and coffee.

Staff from both organizations worked hard at creating lasting relationships during a difficult pandemic winter. They maintained COVID-19 protocols and supported participants with hygiene supplies and winter gear. (Thank you to everyone who donated!)

Over the last two months of the project, we partnered with Nine Circles to pilot their Meeting the Moment project at the Warming Centre. Their staff joined us weekly to provide



Indigenous cultural supports, the services of a Nurse Practitioner and Social Worker, Naloxone kits and harm reduction supplies, and referrals to health care partners. Participants were excited to connect regularly with Nine Circles' staff.

The success of the Warming Centre lies in the strong and long-lasting relationship that WCWRC and SNA have nurtured through the years, and the mutually beneficial collaboration with Nine Circles. Our creative problem-solving skills are what make our

agencies so resourceful and sustainable. We look forward to continuing working together to serve our community.

COMMUNITY AGENCIES WORKING TOGETHER

Early in the pandemic we were approached by 1JustCity, as they had received a donation to purchase meals from local restaurants to provide to community agencies – many more meals than they could manage with their three locations.

As a result, they partnered with us and several other organizations working on food security and have been providing hot meals for our community members for over a year. Without them, stretching our food budgets would have been so much more difficult. We are incredibly grateful for their generosity!

You can learn more about how non-profit agencies in Winnipeg – including WCWRC – worked together to support the community during the pandemic by watching “Holding Winnipeg Together during COVID-19” on YouTube. This video, by Hañwakañ Blaikie Whitecloud, demonstrates that with grassroots collaboration and system changes, a better world is possible now and beyond COVID-19.

HOUSING AND HOTELS

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the connection between housing and public health, along with the urgency of ensuring everyone has access to a place to isolate and protect themselves and their community from the virus.

WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND OUR
PARTNERSHIP WITH A DOWNTOWN
HOTEL, **WE SAFELY SHELTERED WOMEN
AND SUPPORTED THEM TO FIND
PERMANENT HOUSING SOLUTIONS.**

In 2020/21 we received funding from the Government of Canada to support women who were unsheltered or at risk of experiencing homelessness to access temporary hotel stays,



and continued to work with a downtown hotel committed to helping people get through this difficult time.

WITH GRASSROOTS COLLABORATION
AND SYSTEM CHANGES, **A BETTER
WORLD IS POSSIBLE NOW AND
BEYOND COVID-19**

With the stability of a roof over their heads, we were able to support women, many of whom are escaping violence, to get connected to an income source and permanent housing.

Through these partnerships we were able to support 68 women into a safe hotel stay when they needed it and 37 of them transitioned into permanent housing.



BONNIE AND COLETTE THERE'S THIS HOPE NOW

Bonnie and Colette both had good jobs and never imagined they would be homeless. Then Colette got sick and they were illegally evicted from their apartment right before Christmas 2020.

“We pretty much lost absolutely everything we had,” said Bonnie. “All of a sudden we’re in a snow storm, [Colette’s] in a wheelchair, we have two little dogs... we had all these obstacles and that and dangerous situations we were in, that shouldn’t happen to people over 50... There’s so many doors that slammed shut.”

Colette tried to get Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), but her employer hadn’t submitted a record of employment, so “it was just deny, deny, deny,” she said. “A lot of doors were slammed in our faces. And sometimes you just want to give up cause like you get tired of ‘no, no, no.’”



Colette was in a wheelchair and Bonnie is a survivor of cancer, stroke, and being run over by a truck. Things were tough: “people don’t realize how difficult it is to find affordable housing. Both of us used to work and had great jobs at one time. Everybody’s a paycheck away from being homeless.”

They couchsurf during the worst of the winter and in the early spring were living in a tent by the river with Frankie, their 12-year-old Pomeranian and Jacxin, their 2-year-old Chihuahua.

They were in a state of constant fear of getting their things stolen and experiencing violence in their encampment. “It’s just awful out there. That’s probably the worst fear...what could happen,” said Colette.

Then they met our Director of Housing, Kirsten.

“I call her my angel,” said Colette. “Every day it was a visit from her and you could see almost some light in the tunnel... That was a blessing for us. It just opened the door.”

Because of our generous supporters and funders, Kirsten was able to offer them a room in a hotel while we helped them find permanent housing.

Bonnie described being at the hotel as “finally being able to sleep and knowing that you’re ok.” Colette knew then that “there was going to be something good to come out of this, and it was to get our apartment.”

Walking into the apartment that our Housing Placement Worker Sara helped them secure was amazing. It felt safe. “I’m so grateful [Sara] was there and everybody else, cause like, I didn’t even think that this was possible,” said Colette with a big smile on her face.

She continued: “I have to say that, like, when you don’t have your home, you’re displaced, you’re not complete. And now we are complete... It’s like, oh we can breathe and start our life,” said Colette. “There’s this hope now. Before there really wasn’t... There should be a lot more of you guys out there.”



SUPPORT WOMEN LIKE BONNIE &
COLETTE AT **SUPPORTWOMEN.CA**

WOMEN OF **DISTINCTION**



WCWRC was built and is sustained by remarkable women. As a way to honour their contributions, every year we present the Women of Distinction awards, which recognize women who have gone above and beyond expectations in their contributions and commitment to the wellbeing of our Centre, our values, and our community.

BOARD: TRAUTE KLEIN

Traute immigrated to Winnipeg from Germany as a teenager in the 1950s. She ended up making her home in the West End,

and became a long-time volunteer and participant of WCWRC. In 2010, she joined our board and served as a board member until 2014. Traute brought her wealth of knowledge of the neighbourhood to the board and kept present the needs of the local community that the Centre aims to serve in all the work of the board. After resigning from the board, Traute continued to be an active volunteer, especially in the garden, where she loved to get her hands dirty and help community grow food sustainably. She also spent time volunteering

at St. Matthews Maryland Community Ministry and Spence Neighbourhood Association. She loved to travel, paint, write, and play music and sing. Traute passed away in 2021, and is missed by all her friends here at WCWRC.

STAFF: **LISA SPRING**

Lisa joined our staff team in 2011 as our first ever Parent Mentor. Supporting women as they navigated the Child and Family Services system was a passion for Lisa and out of the Parent Mentor program, she established Braids of Strength, a network of agencies that support parents. Later Lisa became our Director of Housing and continued to mentor both staff and community on being strong advocates for themselves. She led the research and development of *Connecting the Circle: A Gender-Based Strategy to End Homelessness in Winnipeg*, which is now used as a benchmark in women's housing work in Manitoba. In her final role as Director of Programs, Lisa worked to further develop the management team, with kindness and wisdom. Lisa left the staff team in 2019, but is still spoken of fondly by all who worked with her and we can still hear her laugh at the lunch table.

COMMUNITY: **VICKI CATEGAS**

Vicki is a Medicine Wheel teacher, breast cancer survivor, Sixties' Scoop survivor, and a warrior. When she moved to Winnipeg from Brandon in the early 2000s as a single mom with two little boys, she felt lost. She needed guidance, companionship, computer skills, and emergency food to get by until payday. She came to WCWRC in 2004, when we were in the basement of 583 Ellice, and it changed her life. The Centre helped her grow and she found a space where she belonged. We gave her and her children hope. Vicki started volunteering right away, giving back to the community that was supporting her. She volunteered first a receptionist and then a programming coordinator, bringing in many programs. Seventeen years later, she's still giving back. She is our Knowledge Keeper Jojo's volunteer assistant, helping provide ceremony for the community. She is so grateful for everything WCWRC has done for her, especially fellow Women of Distinction Marianne Cerilli and Erika Wiebe. And we're so grateful for everything she has done for us.



REVENUE AND EXPENSES

Unsurprisingly, 2020-2021 was an unusual year for funding. In addition to our regular funding, WCWRC received over \$440,000 specific to supporting community through COVID-19. End Homelessness Winnipeg, Winnipeg Foundation and United Way in particular stepped up quickly and generously to support our expanded COVID-related services.

At \$193,885, we received our highest total donations in the Centre's history. That's 30% higher than the next highest year! Thank you to everyone who donated! Thank you for helping us support our community during this difficult time.

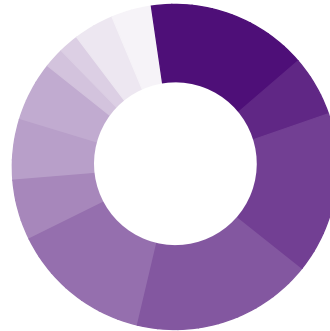
WCWRC's funding sources also continue to be broadly diversified with the largest source of funding coming from the Federal Government at 48%. This diversification is a critical component in the Centre's long-term financial stability.



REVENUE

- FEDERAL GOVERNMENT \$1,078,138
- PROVINCE OF MANITOBA \$252,573
- UNITED WAY \$470,491
- WINNIPEG FOUNDATION \$222,951
- DONATIONS \$193,885
- AMORTIZATION \$73,604
- OTHER \$216,011

TOTAL \$2,507,653



EXPENSES

- HOUSING \$391,336
- SETTLEMENT SERVICES \$147,206
- ADMINISTRATIVE \$407,014
- DROP IN \$422,901
- COVID SUPPORT/OUTREACH \$370,665
- EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION \$143,000
- OCCUPANCY \$108,403
- MENTORSHIP \$107,542
- RESTORING THE BALANCE \$66,592
- FINANCING \$11,896
- AMORTIZATION \$74,197
- HEALING TOGETHER \$105,543

TOTAL \$2,356,295

A HEARTFELT THANKS

The achievements we have highlighted in this report would not be possible without your generosity and caring.

Because of you, we have been able to continue to offer crucial supports to women and families during a very difficult year.

Thank you!



2020/21 FUNDERS & DONORS

Anonymous	MB Building Sustainable Communities
Assiniboine Credit Union	MB Status of Women Secretariat - Family Violence Prevention Program
Bell Canada	MB Green Team
Canadian National Railway Company	MB Housing
Canadian Women's Foundation	Payworks
Community Food Centres	Rogers Foundation
End Homelessness Winnipeg - Reaching Home	Royal Bank of Canada
Indigenous Women's Healing Centre	Telus Friendly Future Foundation
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada	United Way Winnipeg
Jewish Foundation of Manitoba	Winnipeg Foundation
Johnson Group	Harvest Manitoba
Lights On Foundation	Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
	Women and Gender Equality Canada

PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING TO OUR WORK TODAY AT **SUPPORTWOMEN.CA**



**WEST CENTRAL WOMEN'S
RESOURCE CENTRE**

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