

CONNECT

LEARN





EMPOWER

West Kootenay Women's Association
ANNUAL REPORT
2012-2013



OUR MISSION

Creating healthy community through providing support and resources for women and advancing gender equality.

OUR VISION

Women's empowerment in a world free of oppression.

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND THE BOARD CHAIR

This year marked the 40th Anniversary of the Women's Centre. Given the dwindling number of centres such as ours around the province and country, forty years of existence is no small feat. It is with great gratitude and appreciation that we acknowledge the vital support of our community that has helped sustain the Women's Centre for so many years.

To reflect where we feel we are after these four decades, this year the Coordinating Collective re-conceived our Mission and Vision through an in-depth brainstorming session. These framed our activities of the year. Guided by our mission to create a healthy community, which means an inclusive community, we focused on reaching out and reducing barriers to those who can benefit from the resources of the Women's Centre. Guided by our mission to support and empower, we have deepened and broadened our programming, further strengthening the capacity of the Women's Centre to be a place of learning and connection, where women of diverse ages and backgrounds can build relationships, gain skills, and acquire knowledge.

It is challenging to continue this work without secure, dependable funding sources, and so we have focused our energy on developing models of sustainable funding that, with our community's continued support, will allow the Women's Centre to grow and thrive in the coming years.

With Gratitude,
Elena Banfield and Beth Seed



THE COORDINATING COLLECTIVE
TOP L-R: Gitta Ridder, Beth Seed, Elena Banfield.
MIDDLE: Jane Byers, Bobbie Ogletree, Erin Rooney.
BOTTOM: Leah Lychowyd, Brittan McClay.
Not pictured: Ana Seed, Hannah Roy.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

- We continued to be more inclusive of youth, continuing our **Gender Action Project Theatre (GAP)** for a second year. We expanded to holding two "rounds" of workshops, and extended our reach to Salmo, a school and community that has access to fewer services than Nelson. We look forward to continuing this project the coming year and seeing more positive, transformative outcomes.

- **Community Threads**, our inter-generational skill-sharing workshops, reached out to senior women to be participants as well as workshop leaders and mentors, with over half the participants aged 55 and over.

- Through our new textiles skills program, **Cross-Cultural Threads**, we seek to respect and honour the traditions and gifts of Aboriginal women in our community, who will lead workshops on making traditional crafts, and teach participants about the protocols, history, and meaning surrounding the process of creating.

- We re-vamped and strengthened our **Rooted in Community** volunteer training to be more comprehensive, giving women transferable skills to become active community members through volunteering at the Centre and elsewhere, as well as focusing on self-care and building supportive connections within the group.

- We initiated an **outreach project** to rural communities in the Regional District to inform geographically isolated women about the resources of the Women's Centre, and ensure that women in the surrounding areas know that as the only Women's Centre in the region, our services are here for them.

- In February we joined 207 countries in **One Billion Rising**, a worldwide movement to raise awareness that 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. We held a day of dance workshops, a flash mob at the Mall, and a night of powerful performances and dancing. In addition to help raise funds for the Women's Centre, this



One Billion Rising Volunteers



Volunteers of Song, Slam & Sass



December 6th Memorial

event connected us globally, and made us more visible locally. It was driven by many young women, including teens, and engaged younger generations in the work of the Women's Centre. It was also great to see male allies at the events.

- We launched a new **monthly giving program**. Supporters can easily sign up for monthly, automatic donations of any amount to the Women's Centre. Even a few dollars more a month can contribute in a meaningful and sustaining way to the Women's Centre. As more people join, this kind of reliable, regular funding will be an immense help to us, and will allow us to focus more time and energy on the work of supporting women and families in the community.

- The Coordinating Collective participated in a one-day **financial re-design** intensive. We took an honest and realistic look at our finances and challenges, explored new ways to address our funding needs, and set goals for the future in the form of a five-year workplan. We came away from this session with more clarity about where we're at, and lots of inspiration for moving forward.



Community Threads



GAP Workshop

OUR PROJECTS

Learning Together, Creating Together

Our textiles programs are gatherings of women sharing stories, talents, skills, and cultures, honouring each other's gifts and experience. Community Threads, our inter-generational skill-sharing textiles program, involved 106 women, from ages 6-85. This program was so well-loved, volunteers have kept it running after the official end-date, mentoring each other and working on projects every week. Our Aboriginal crafts workshops, Cross-Cultural Threads, will build on this program and grow it in new ways to encompass the rich traditions of local First Nations women.



Moccasin-making workshop

"Friendships are made, women are supported through difficult times, deep, real conversations occur over the clack of knitting needles."

Engaging Youth

This was the second year of our Gender Action Project Theatre (GAP). In two rounds of 10-week workshop sessions, 24 youth (ages 14 to 19) gathered together to share a meal, form bonds, and create interactive theatre exploring issues around gender, stereotyping, homophobia, transphobia, and gender-based violence. The participants drew from their own experience to collaboratively create scenes about the topics that impact their lives, and how to respond positively to gender—based issues. We held five public performances, in Nelson, Trail, and Castlegar, with over 150 people attending. Participants have told us GAP strengthened their friendships, improved their self-confidence, increased their awareness, and empowered them to have healthy relationships.



GAP Participants

"I've stopped hiding so much."

"My friends and I are closer and my mind is more open."

"I've learned to be a better person."

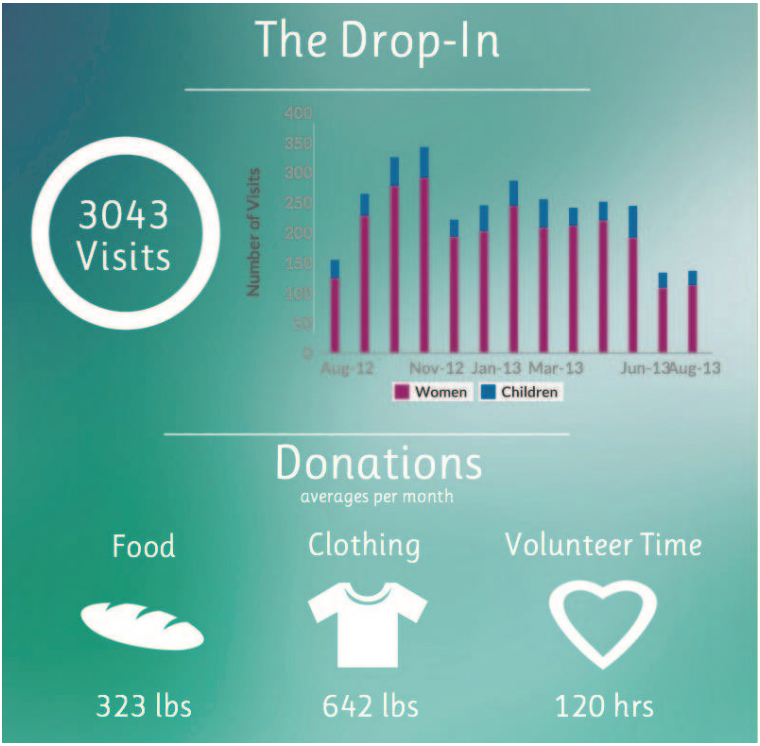
Building Community Through Volunteering

This year we deepened and broadened our volunteer training, Rooted in Community. Through this free, comprehensive 20-hour training participants learn about important resources in our community, develop peer counseling and listening skills, explore their relationship to feminism and self-care, and build strong bonds within the group. We ran two sessions with 24 participants total.

Sharing Space

The Drop-In is our major project. Open Tuesday-Thursday from 12-4, it offers a welcoming space where women can receive referrals and compassionate support from peer counselors, as well as relax with a cup of coffee, pick up free food, clothing, and toiletries, read books in the library; use the internet and computers. It also provides a secure mailing address, a children's play area, bathing facilities, a kitchen and a sewing room with equipment.

The Drop-In is largely made possible by committed volunteers and generous donations. Without secure and reliable funding, it is community support that makes this essential resource possible.



Finding Strength in Connection
One Woman's Story

Being in my mid-fifties, I never expected to find myself so terribly needy at this stage of my life. It seems as though it was just awhile ago that my life was full, meaningful...then suddenly I found myself empty-nested, unable to work due to a medical issue, my mother passed away and then, surprisingly, I was divorced. Friends disappeared, I felt lonely, isolated, and 'useless.' I felt so terribly disconnected from all the things I'd loved so much.

"I felt lonely, isolated, and 'useless.' I felt so terribly disconnected…"

Then, someone told me about the Women's Centre orientation session. I was so reluctant to attend. I felt like a lesser person—my self-esteem was at an all-time low. I gathered the little courage I had and just showed up. Women come to the Centre for different reasons. For me, I didn't need free food or free clothes, but I realized that I was greatly in need of the company of women. When I first started [Rooted in Community], I felt anxious and insecure. It seemed I could barely put a sentence together. However, quite quickly I felt the warmth and connection with all the other women in the group. The respect and kindness modeled by our totally awesome trainer-was amazing. We learned so many things, but, most importantly, I felt 'at home' with this diverse collection of women. By the end of the training program, I realized that I had rediscovered 'my voice.' What a blessing!

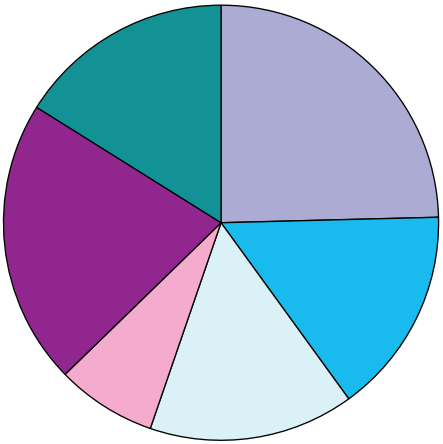
"I realized that I had re-discovered 'my voice.' What a blessing!"

Now, just one year after I started at the Women's Centre, I am well enough, strong enough, and confident enough to return to work. I am so grateful to all the women I've met and for all that the Women's Centre makes possible.

FINANCIALS

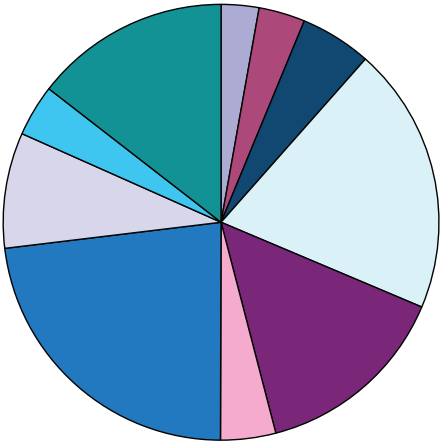
This fiscal year our revenues were $146,299 and our expenses totaled $131,847, leaving a surplus of $14,452. Please see our Financial Statements for a detailed report.

Funding Sources



- BC Gaming Commission (25%)
- Fundraising (15%)
- Donations (15%)
- Grants under $5000 (8%)
- Service Canada (21%)
- Columbia Basin Trust (16%)

Expenses



- Canada Student Jobs (3%)
- Organizational Development (4%)
- Office and accounting (5%)
- Wages & Benefits (20%)
- GAP (15%)
- Outreach (4%)
- Drop-in (24%)
- Renovations, House Expenses (9%)
- Archival Project (4%)
- Community Threads (15%)

THANK YOU

To our donors we say thank you, for your commitment to the Women's Centre, for your conviction in our vision, for your generosity, for your understanding that empowered women are an essential part of building a vibrant, just, and healthy community.

To our volunteers we say thank you, for over 3000 hours of work this year, for your compassion, for caring for our home, our garden, our free store, and the many other things you do to support the Women's Centre beyond measure.

OUR DONORS

Jana Russell-Loewen
Ana Seed
Beth Seed
Betty Bateman
Bev Hergott
Bobbie Ogletree
Brooke & Sandi Leatherman
Callie Chatten
Candace Batycki
Carol Bassingthwaite
CMAW Carpenters Castlegar Union
David Roscoe
Dr. David Reoka
Dr. Joel Kailia
Elena Banfield
Erin Rooney
Francesca Blishen
Friends of Nelson Elders
Hannah Roy
HEU Hospital Employees Union
(Kootenay Regional Office)
I.O.D.E.
Jane Byers
Jesse Hobson
Jordanna Isaacson
Kootenay Coop
Kootenay Medical Aesthetics
Linda Van Hombeeck
Lindsay Potter
Lions Club of Nelson
Lorna Marsh
Molly Strachan/Cast of the Vagina
Monologues
Mountain Water Spa
Nelson Brewing Company
Pegasis McCauley
Sandra Blaikie
Tamara Abramson
Tasha Bassingthwaite
Terrance Bouie
United Way of Castlegar
West Kootenay Roller Derby

OUR FOUNDATION & GRANT FUNDERS

Bank of Montreal
BC Gaming Commission
Canadian Women's Foundation
Columbia Basin Trust
Ministry of Community, Sport, and
Cultural Development
Osprey Foundation
Regional District Central Kootenay
Service Canada

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Alex McGown
Allie Buffone
Alison Richards
Ana Chamgoulova
Andria Green
Ani Gallagher
Ameeta Bhabra
Bev Hergott
Brigitte Tromans
Brittany Peterson
Bryar Radonich
Bryhre Cormack
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Christine Parton
Celeste Harvey
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Tory Johnston
Tracy Fillion
Vanessa Klassen
Verena Shaw
Veronique Marty
Vita Luthmers

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S CENTRE

- Join the monthly giving program (form below)
- Become a volunteer
- Hold a fundraiser
- Attend our events
- Become a member
- Spread the word about the Women's Centre



DONATION FORM

When you donate to the Women's Centre, your donation ripples outwards through individuals, families, and the whole community. Become a sustainer of the Women's Centre by filling out this form and returning it to the Women's Centre. Thank you for your generous support!

Donations above $20 are tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ Province: _____

Email: _____

For monthly donations please fill in the information below or visit www.canadahelps.org

Credit Card Type: ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ American Express

Credit Card Number: _____

Expiry Date: _____ Security Code (3-digit number beside signature): _____

Cardholder Name: _____

Amount: $ _____ Start Date: _____

☐ I am interested in finding out more about volunteering.

☐ I would like to receive monthly email updates.

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